COMMONWEAL

$2.00 June 2, 1995

IS ORDAINING WOMEN THINKABLE?

Charles Donahue, Jr.

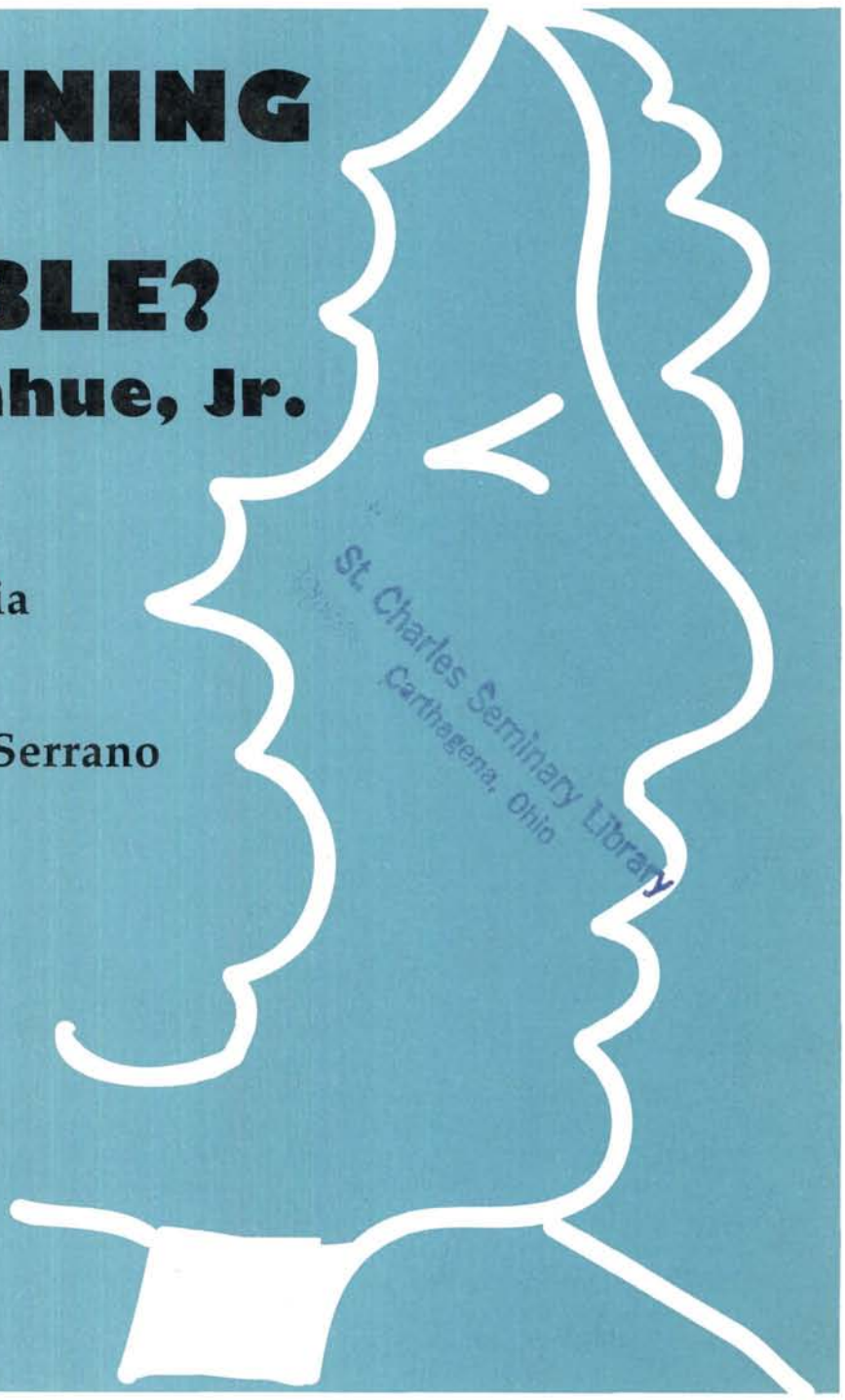
WHERE ATHEISTS WALK ON COALS
Countercultural in India
Robert Worth

PAUL ELIE on Andres Serrano

DAVID O'CONNELL
on François Mauriac's
'Woman of the Pharisees'

EDWARD McGLYNN GAFFNEY, Jr. :
Should the voice from the pulpit be taxed?

PAUL BAUMANN
rides the subway



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CORRESPONDENCE

Seven homilies a week?

Chicago, Ill.

To the Editors: A factor not yet mentioned in the discussion of Dennis Burke's article on preaching [April 7] is the post-Vatican II practice of including a homily in every celebration of Mass. In the dark old days of thirty years ago, homilies (then called sermons) were for Sundays. Celebrants seldom preached at weekday Masses; now, they almost always do. But few if any priests have the time or energy to give seven well-prepared homilies a week. It now seems that the limited preparation given to weekday homilies sets the pattern for Sundays as well.

JOHN MAHER

Flawed hero

Stuttgart, Germany

To the Editors: I do not understand how a nineteenth-century bishop who published a defense of slavery can be regarded as a hero ["An Americanist Hero," April 7]. While John England may have made innovative reforms in his diocese and vigorously supported the culture and institutions of his adopted country, the imagery of Matthew 23:24 comes to mind when one remembers that the evil of chattel slavery was the great moral issue of his day.

MICHAEL CHEW

They didn't write it

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: In his article "Catholics and the 'Religious Right'" [May 5], George W. Gerner cites a Catholic volunteer with the Christian Coalition who refers to the declaration "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" as "a document of understanding" between Pat Robertson and Cardinal John O'Connor. While those of us responsible for the declaration are pleased that Mr. Robertson and Cardinal O'Connor were among the many Evangelical and Catholic leaders who have endorsed the declaration, neither of them was involved in producing the statement. It is therefore grossly misleading to say that it is a "document of understanding" between Mr. Robertson and the cardinal.

(REV.) RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

The writer is editor-in-chief of First Things.

From the editors: "Grossly" misleading? Isn't that mildly hyperbolic?

Gays & church can talk

San Jose, Calif.

To the Editors: I am honored that James L. Nash reviewed my *AIDS, Gays, and the American Catholic Church* for your pages [March 24], yet he clearly missed the point of my book. To suggest, as he does, that a mutually enriching conversation between gays and the church cannot occur until there is agreement on the morality of homosexual acts is like saying that Protestants and Catholics cannot profitably converse until they first agree on papal infallibility. The point I make in my book is that meaningful dialogue can occur on other grounds, even though our two cultures have fundamentally different approaches to sexual ethics.

Is it really necessary for a proudly gay man to abandon his own sexual identity and ethic for such a dialogue to occur? No more than for a traditional Catholic to relinquish the conviction that homosexuality is an abomination. Rather it requires a largess able to encompass even those whose values I may deplore. It is on such tolerance that civil discourse between gays and Catholics relies. The impulse for dialogue is hardly postmodern (as Nash accused me of being); indeed, it was foundational to the thought of that great American Jesuit, John Courtney Murray.

Despite several fundamentally irreconcilable differences, our two cultures share strong convictions regarding the rights and responsibilities of persons living with AIDS. In a society as polarized as ours, such areas of common ground need to be celebrated and exploited. And perhaps along the way, as we gays and Catholics wrestle with the complexities of this epidemic, some of our old stereotypes (such as one unfortunately presented by Nash, that gay relationships are nothing more than sex acts and are therefore anything but sacred) may begin to fall away, and we could develop, as Murray hoped, the conversation of civilized human beings.

RICHARD L. SMITH

The author replies:

In his letter, Mr. Smith claims I believe that "a mutually enriching conversation between gays and the church cannot occur until there is agreement on the morality of homosexual acts." On the contrary, my review says that it is over this disputed question that genuine dialogue ought to *begin*. Genuine dialogue cannot begin with agreement, or there would be nothing to talk about! Moreover, unlike debate, successful dialogue does not necessarily end with a "winner," nor need it result in total agreement.

Dialogue does entail, as Smith suggests, the desire to understand the other's difference, the ability to accept fundamental disagreement. As John Courtney

(Continued on page 30)

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COMMONWEAL

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Action still needed

We seem about to dismantle one of the nation's most important, albeit flawed, experiments. Affirmative action policies have been critical in the national effort to compensate for the injustices visited upon African-Americans by centuries of slavery and decades of segregation and Jim Crow laws. In the 1960s, affirmative action was devised to redress the effects of discrimination against blacks by supporting positive efforts to educate, house, hire, and promote men and women, boys and girls, who had been kept from their rightful place in American society.

These measures have always operated under critical scrutiny, sometimes from federal courts, sometimes from social critics, sometimes from the beneficiaries themselves. They have not, as some would claim, provided blacks a free ride. But not until two academics—self-described staunch conservatives—announced their plan to put a referendum to end affirmative action on the 1996 California ballot has anyone seriously acted to do away with it. Now the media treat its demise as a foregone conclusion. The "Contract with America" and a surging conservative agenda may provoke this conclusion, but without evidence that it is sound policy.

Don Wycliff wrote in these pages last issue (May 19) that "people have the nerve to ask whether thirty years of affirmative action isn't enough. Incredible!" Still, even he seems resigned: "The political facts of life suggest to me that thirty years will have to be enough." He may be right. But before the great dismantling begins, let the nation think carefully about what we are doing and how we do it.

There is no doubt that there are problems with affirmative action. One of the most serious has been with us virtually from the start: Many "minorities"—women, Hispanics, and Asians—have benefited from affirmative-action policies, though their claims to compensatory justice do not carry nearly as much weight as do the claims of African-Americans and, arguably, Native Americans. The inclusion of other groups, which once may have seemed an expedient device to garner greater political support for affirmative action, has now become an argument for ending affirmative action, because such inclusion overreaches the primary intent of the policy and dilutes the claims of compensatory justice. Whatever discrimination other "minorities" have suffered, it is true that only African-Americans were enslaved and held in bondage by the law of the land, including the Constitution, and only they suffered the discrimination that followed. Furthermore, the interest-group politics organized around "minority" membership impedes our political parties in responding to new issues; the Democratic party, so often torn among competing racial, ethnic, and gender groups, is especially hobbled in its ability even to discuss affirmative action.

Wycliff's article points to another possibly adverse outcome that may prove "detrimental to the efforts of blacks to help themselves." Quota systems, or mandated pref-

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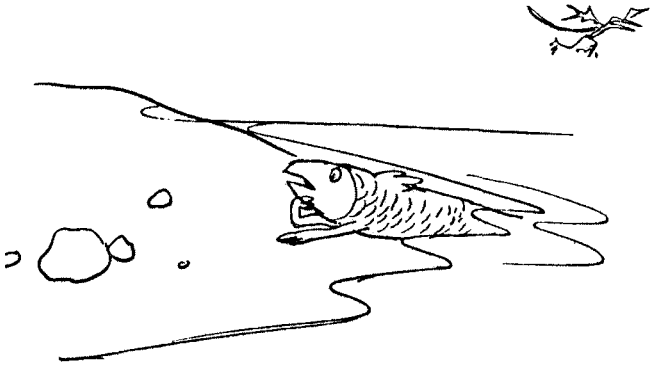
erences, may allow blacks, youngsters and adolescents in particular, to believe that they don't have to study or work hard to compete with their white peers, because they've "got an ace up [their] sleeve," while allowing their white peers the misconception that blacks succeed only because of that ace. But quota systems are not a necessary component of affirmative action; the U.S. military, which may be our most racially integrated institution, sets goals but does not change standards. It does help candidates to meet those standards.

And then there is the growing and seemingly explosive anger over what some call "reverse discrimination," the view that affirmative action has resulted in discrimination against white males. If this fuels the conservative drive to end affirmative action, that is unfortunate because there is precious little evidence that reverse discrimination exists. The loss of high-wage manufacturing jobs has made it hard for high school graduates, black or white, to find work and to establish themselves. The answer to that problem is high school educations that make people life-long learners, along with government support for job retraining.

Antidiscrimination legislation and affirmative action have made ours a different society, in significant ways a better society, than it was thirty years ago. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 along with other measures, legislative and judicial, ended legal segregation and made discrimination a civil offense. Affirmative action boosted those antidiscrimination laws by helping qualified blacks get jobs where union practices and lingering bigotry seemed impenetrable despite the law, and where old boy networks, rooted in colleges, channeled white males into high-paying white-collar jobs in the legal, financial, and political establishment. Those walls, and many others, have been breached; workplaces from police departments to newsrooms to law firms now look more like America as a whole. Integration is the rule in most colleges and universities and in many workplaces. But discrimination still exists in housing and neighborhoods and, as a consequence, in the public schools. Racism persists.

Even so, Americans—black and white—are better off than we were thirty years ago because of the legal, moral, and social suasion provided by affirmative action. Perhaps such suasion is not needed for another thirty years, but it will be needed for some time to come. Rather than the abrupt termination promoted by the California referendum and the conservative agenda, give the spirit of voluntary affirmative action the kind of strong support that would make it ultimately unnecessary. Reemphasize the primary reason for affirmative action for African-Americans—compensatory justice for slavery; Hispanics, Asians, and women could not claim the benefit of affirmative-action policies, but like blacks remain covered by antidiscrimination laws. To emphasize the seriousness of those laws, add criminal penalties to the civil ones now meted out for discrimination.

Is there an end in sight to affimative action? Shouldn't that be the day when most African-Americans no longer need it to attain their rightful place in American society? The current debate might usefully set forth a set of measures: guidelines on educational achievement, employment rates, median income, and residential integration that would signal the final redress of a national injustice.



"To be, or not to be...."

ET CETERA

IT WASN'T MARX The recently reborn notion that poverty should be tolerated because it spurs effort was rejected by a certain economist in the course of an argument favoring high wages for workers. It "seems not very probable," he wrote, "that men in general should work better when they are ill-fed than when they are well-fed, when they are disheartened than when they are in good spirits, when they are frequently sick than when they are generally in good health." According to a recently published book by Stephen Holmes, *Passions and Constraint: On the Theory of Liberal Democracy* (University of Chicago Press), the writer of those lines was Adam Smith. Not the one we see on TV. The one who wrote *The Wealth of Nations*, died in 1790, and was later canonized by the National Association of Manufacturers.

ADDRESS ENVY There are a number of things the English do with which it is fruitless to compete, don't you think? One is making a statement by asking a question. Another is "Rumpole of the Bailey." But perhaps most impressive of all is the poetic ring given to the most trivial facts of life. Like addresses. Listen to the music in the addresses of our sister publications, the *Catholic Herald* and the *Tablet*. The Catholic Herald Ltd., Herald House, Lambs Passage, Bunhill Row, London. (Lambs Passage, Bunhill Row!) And somewhat more ecclesiastical: The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London.

Here on terse Dutch Street we are surrounded by Maiden Lane, Ann, John, Fulton, Liberty, the infamous Wall, and anachronistic Beaver streets. But there is no Bunhill Row or Lambs Passage in sight, and we judge ourselves deprived. Dutch Street has a quaint enough ring for Manhattan, but how much more soothing things might be. Commonweal, Reform House, Ethereal Heights, Pastry Crescent, New York?

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HITTING BOTTOM

CUSTODY OF THE EYES IN NEW YORK

In April, New York City started getting rid of the blowzy advertising posters that have long adorned the inside of its subway cars. "Brand train oriented" advertising, where the space on each subway car is dedicated to just one client, is being sold by the revenue-starved city to large corporations. The quaint, crudely designed notices for local podiatrists, furniture stores, and cosmetic surgeons that have played such a large role in the subliminal lives of New Yorkers will eventually go the way of the Edsel and David Dinkins. Figures of local mythology, such as the ill-fated "Dr. Tush," the world's most euphonious proctologist, and the black-and-white cartoon chronicle of Julio and Marisol, an interminable AIDS soap opera, will be lost to history. The costs of progress are high indeed.

Certainly the loss of these promises of consumer bliss and cheap medical miracles will be a considerable deprivation of my already meager fantasy life. Descending into the subway I leave behind a world of mere status anxiety to enter an alternative universe of ubiquitous sexual and physical menace. I'm talking about genital warts, here. Posters also warn me of bunions, herpes, and pickpockets, the deadly allure of drugs, and the metaphysical abomination of an unwanted pregnancy. More prosaically, I am urged to pursue my education, get a new pair of eyeglasses, raise my SAT scores, remove my tattoos, and visit the Transit Museum. In short, I am the object of unending solicitousness and selfless concern.

I will miss all this eccentric exhortation. But I will especially miss the efforts of the New York State Health Department to dissuade the young from, as it is so delicately put, "doin' it." In a touching display of Gradgrind-like faith in the magical powers of "facts, facts, facts," the Health Department recently put up an eye-catching poster. "Everybody's not doin' it," the poster announces in big bold red letters. Below that, in more somber hues, we get the epidemiology: "Sex is risky. It can lead to unwanted pregnancy, AIDS, or other STDS." Below that comes the kicker, a diagram of compromise from the culture wars. "Condoms help...but not doin' it is 100% protection."

To hold the attention of its intended audience, the ad uses a picture. For my own part, the picture provoked, if not thoughts about sexual continence, then certainly about sexual politics. The picture is of a young lady's rear end, a rear end so snugly packed into a pair of blue jeans that no fleshly contour goes unamplified or unappreciated. This denim-draped Aphrodite beckons us to the higher morality of protected sex, or the even more heroic discipline of abstinence.

Chastity, I confess, was not what immediately leaped into my loathsome little mind when I first studied the poster. I do not consider myself exceptionally libidinal, but like most men I have upon occasion noticed a woman from the reverse angle. I think I can say, without fear of contradiction or infection, that someone in the New York State Health Department has done the same, for the department's poster child boasts as voluptuous a form as has been seen since the heroic Mamie Van Doren.

Catholics used to preach (about the time of Mamie Van Doren), and even occasionally practice, something called "custody of the eyes." When first confronted with the conundrum of the "not doin' it" poster, I tried to summon those archaic instincts. Averting my eyes from the state's salacious encouragements, I set my face toward the next poster. It read: "Feel the Passion of Leather." This offered little respite. I looked farther afield. "Designer Braces" and an ad for a miraculous allergy remedy came into focus. I took this personally. I have built a life of sexual timidity and resentment around my crooked teeth, bleary eyes, and runny nose. I would not be mocked. My gaze returned to the undebauched haunches before me.

As a frustrated copywriter, I tried to imagine how I might recast the Health Department ad to better focus the prurient mind on public health concerns. "Everybody's not doin' it. Those who do do it are liable to criminal penalities up to and including an eternity in hell." Such sentiments were surprisingly effective in their day, if somewhat unenlightened. "Everybody's not doin' it. Look around." Well, in New York that might not be the case. "Everybody's not doin' it. As improbable as that sounds...."

Trying to practice 100-percent protection, let alone custody of the eyes, in New York City is a bit like working for Ben and Jerry's and trying to swear off fat and sugar. The spirit is dithering, the flesh is weak, the free market scantily clad and never sleeps—or never sleeps alone. The enterprising proprietor of my local newsstand displays his girlie magazines at precisely eye level. I can report that *Playboy*'s April cover featured an impossibly lissome young woman whose splendidly shaped, flawlessly tanned (how? where?), and coyly presented gluteus maximus is unlikely to prove a spur to self-denial. But who knows, given the logic of the state Health Department, maybe *Playboy*'s cover girl will launch a new age of sexual renunciation, if not faith.

Not everything posted in the subways is asinine. The Transit system also offers "Poetry in Motion," which has featured the

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work of Langston Hughes, Dorothy Parker, and Seamus Heaney, among others. I wonder if preachment on the eternal question of doin' or not doin' it might not benefit from the use of a vocabulary that transcends the acronym-driven abstractions of the clinic and the bureaucratic state. Might not the key to effective prophylactics—namely, human motivation—lie in cherishing the beloved rather than girding one's loins against the microbes?

"Poetry in Motion" recently featured Richard Wilbur's "Transit." The poem describes a woman, observed silently from a distance, stepping onto a sidewalk, pulling on her gloves, and walking away. This seemingly unexceptional moment is charged with the fierce longing for connection and meaning that any sense of sexual responsibility must build upon. Seeing her, "A phantom heraldry of all the loves/Blares from the lintel?" Wilbur suggests. Her "perfect feet" take her down the street, "Leaving the stations of her body there/ As a whip maps the countries of the air."

Mapping the countries of the air lacks the misleading urgency of the state's doggerel about condoms, sexually transmitted diseases, and fetishized body parts. But such spiritual cartography does have the immense virtue of describing recognizable human behavior. The vocabulary of the Health Department is better suited to controlling the breeding habits of livestock.

And what if the Health Department is given a "brand" train of its own? Well, not readin' it is 100-percent protection.

PAUL BAUMANN

REPORT FROM MISSISSIPPI

MIXING RELIGION & BUSINESS
SOMETIMES IT WORKS

What are the chances of upward mobility for a group of poor, black church people—96 percent on welfare—in rural Mississippi, the poorest state in the nation? What is their prospect for economic success if they don't get a dime from the Ford Foundation, the Fortune 500, or from rich celebrities and athletes? Or assistance and set-aside contracts from the Department of Housing and Urban Development or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission?

That was the situation of the Greater Christ Temple in Meridian, Mississippi, a church founded in 1959. In 1977, it initiated its REACH program for economic independence. The program began with peanuts—literally: Church members bought peanuts with their food stamps and resold them in the church basement. Now they own a gas station, two motels, three restaurants, a housing development, four thousand acres of farmland, a thousand head of cattle, a hog operation, two chicken farms, two meat-processing plants, a construction company, a steel fabricating plant, a school, a clinic, and a nursery.

"We stopped the 'crayfish syndrome': when you put all the crayfish into a pail, one starts out, and all the others reach up and pull him down," says Bishop Luke Edwards, the pastor of the church. "There's no welfare or food stamps now. We're saving the federal government $300,000. Still, blacks come out here and look around and say, 'Some white man must be behind all of this.'"

Green Acres is the congregation's new fifty-four-acre housing subdivision in Utaw, Alabama. One-hundred-and thirty-two homes are being built for sale to the public. Heritage Construction—a business owned and operated by the congregation's members—supplies the heavy equipment: eighteen-wheelers, backhoes, dump trucks. Also in Utaw, the church runs a motel.

Then there is ACE (Accelerated Christian Education), the congregation's K-12 boarding school. On top of math and reading, students learn how to run a hog farm and operate restaurants. They regularly outscore their counterparts in state schools. Recently, the local juvenile courts ordered twenty-six kids to enroll for a straight dose of rehabilitation. The school's rules aren't complex: no drinking, no smoking, no drugs, no weapons, no TV, and no dating. And it's lights out for students at 8:30. Midnight basketball isn't needed here.

There have been setbacks along the way. As Bishop Edwards likes to note, "There's no easy road to success." The local government, for example, has served up costly mandates and even conducted investigations. Eleanor Walker, office administrator at REACH, says that "investigations and regulations by the welfare department and the Department of Human Services have forced us to spend a tremendous amount of money" on things like restroom changes and more fire equipment. "Some of it," she says, "seems like harassment." She adds that a big disappointment has been tensions with some leaders in the local NAACP: "It's an ideological split. Bishop Edwards believes that self-reliance comes from a conservative approach, self-help, and less dependence on government. The NAACP is totally the opposite."

"Black people," says Edwards, "can be just as successful as anyone else, but our leaders have entrapped us in government handouts. I lived in those neighborhoods. Welfare broke up the families, put the father out of the home, and let another man lay up there all he wanted. Handouts robbed our people, robbed them of their self-respect."

The bottom line at REACH is to focus on opportunities rather than on obstacles, says Edwards. "Racism is an excuse. It's a song. No, the playing field isn't even, but we make it even. We proved we can make it in Mississippi, the poorest state in the nation, and Alabama isn't far behind. Think what we can do in New York or Chicago. Look at the Cubans out in the ocean coming here. It *is* the land of opportunity."

What's at work in Meridian, Mississippi, and Utaw, Alabama, is the basic belief that every person is created in the image of God, a bottom-line conviction that values both the Ten Commandments and the 3-Rs, starting with people's spiritual values before their skills, and emphasizing less dependence and more plain business sense. Maybe it is a prescription to reverse

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the deadly disease gripping America's inner cities.

A black bishop who doesn't look beyond the poor community itself for salvation, who sees potential business success in the faces of his flock, may seem naively out-of-step. To those watching from the ground, any bird that is out of formation risks being seen as misguided. But maybe it is the rest of the flock that is off the track.

RALPH R. REILAND

Ralph R. Reiland is an associate professor of economics at Robert Morris College. He owns Amel's Restaurant in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

REPORT FROM AUSTRIA

TIME TRAVELERS

BOUND FOR THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

A double decker bus heading south to Merano, Italy. Beautiful countryside—red roofs, vineyards, steeple-centered villages—is seen scooting past the windows as we go through the Rhineland. All shapes and sizes of men and women singers fill the bus. Recent college graduates to folks in their seventies make up this group called Musica Sacra from Cincinnati, Ohio. A chorus of forty-five voices touring and performing from Rüdesheim to Rome. Dr. Helmut Roehrig, a vibrant and brilliantly talented music director, is leading the tour. The concerts reflect the great resources of traditional Catholic music, as well as Afro-American spirituals. "Ezechiel Saw the Wheel," "Deep River," Randall Thompson's "Alleluia," Mozart's "Regina Caeli," motets by Maurice Duruflé, much more.

Sprinkled among the singers are spouses, friends, and relatives numbering about fifteen—bringing the caravan to sixty in all.

We just stopped and enjoyed a picnic lunch organized by the director's long-time friend and superb host in Germany, Heinrich Gerhard. Rolls, sausage, bread, fruit, cheese, wine, and soft drinks. A gypsy-like scene at the Autobahn rest stop. Clusters of people sitting on the ground in the shade pattern from the trees. The sounds of chatter and laughter mingle with diminishing sausage rolls, fruit, beverages, and the bright color of animated faces.

At six o'clock this morning we gathered for a hearty breakfast of breads, cheese, ham, hard-boiled eggs, orange juice, and delicious strong coffee, served lovingly by an all-seeing mother and alert grandson in the cafe of the Rebstock Hotel in Rüdesheim. We carried our luggage down steep flights of stairs to be loaded in the bus in which we are now traveling.

I am a husband, nonsinger, enjoying the tour with my song-filled wife. Yesterday evening, Saturday, was a deeply moving experience for me. We have been in the heart of the Rhine wine country. After lunch, the choir members dressed for performance in their dark pants and skirts and white tops and green cummerbunds. Then they gathered for rehearsal in the hotel arcade. Thirty minutes of intense rehearsal ends with arrival of the bus. We pile in and the motors roar. A frantic check for stragglers. Forward, reverse, forward. The driver threads his way through the lovely narrow, cobbled streets of Rüdesheim. We are headed for the village of Kiedrich, nestled in the Rhine valley, an ancient village with a glorious church, Saint Valentinus, dating back to the fifteenth century, with an enclosing wall creating a courtyard between it and Saint Michael Chapel.

The bus gropes its way to the plaza areas outside the church, stops, and the passengers alight. As I write this our host just announced we will soon be entering Austria. The scene outside is dairy farms and the Alps in the distance. The choir members follow the director, who grew up in this village and parish, into the walled yard and proceed to the Saint Michael Chapel. This evening's concert will be in Saint Valentinus.

The nonsingers, looking a bit lost, hang out around the church entry. It becomes evident that a group of local people are in the midst of a prayer service, honoring a wedding anniversary. I circle the church exterior and drink in the form and structure of this ancient stone embodiment of the Catholic faith wrought by a village of 3,000 people, some five hundred years ago. This church was completed just as Columbus set sail for the new world in 1492. After circling around the outside and beholding the structure, sculptured details, and decorative elements, I go inside. The rise and fall of repetitive and rhythmic voices of praying people permeates the wonderful enclosure of faith and mingles with the light and space. I look around and there is a great deal to behold. The space enclosed by the building itself; the images—painted, sculpted—are one fabulous work of art after another. This is not the art world, this is the art of the Christian world. This is the art of the community of God's people. This is the embodiment of a community's vision and its place in the cosmos. These artists, designers, craftsmen, and artisans were certainly expressing themselves, but it was coincidental. They were not conscious, or even less self-conscious

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of it. They were producing the good, the true, and the beautiful. These artists were concerned with the timeless, the immeasurable, the transcendental—a paradigm very different from that of today's artist, who seeks the timely, the measurable, the relevant, and the momentary.

I find myself shocked, lonely, humbled, yet enchanted and delighted. Shocked to look at our culture and our attitudes in the very midst of God's blinding revelation. I realize we are largely lacking in direct acts of love and gratitude through our culture. We are puffed up about our accomplishments and progress. In that light our "backwardness" as a people shocks me. I am lonely because my whole professional life for fifty years has striven to accomplish—in our time and in a way appropriate to my world—what was accomplished here in this small village in the fourteen hundreds. Lonely because I am experiencing an inner journey that is probably not shared by many of those I am with. Perhaps it is obvious why it is humbling. The real reverence and respect and comradeship I feel with these brothers and sisters of the fifteenth century who are still present in the walls, give me a true sense of both the worth and deficiency of my own work. Why exhilarated and delighted? I am filled with new hope. I see more clearly a new paradigm for the artist. As Thomas Merton has said, "the oldest thing is the newest thing." The Holy Spirit is with me as I rejoice in my ancestors, on whose shoulders we all stand.

Suddenly the space is filled with song as the concert starts. Beautiful voices. Methodist, Jew, Catholic, Quaker, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, as well as the unsure. Euro-American and one African-American. All unified by the music. Roehrig, chairman of the Xavier University music department, conducts. Glorious sounds pour out and fill the church. This music shares the same ancient and modern vitality as the images and artifacts and architecture—timeless, immeasurable, and transcendent. An hour of antiquity and modernity—united in sight and sound. Native and foreign, young and old, men and women, sharing a comprehensive experience with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit dwelling among us, and in us, as we experience the good, the true, and the beautiful.

It was the sixth day since we landed in Frankfurt. We travel through lovely town after lovely town in Germany and Italy, where the central cultural symbol is the church. Tomorrow—Vatican City and a concert performance at Saint Ignatius Church—a high point of the tour, which then continues back north and departs from Frankfurt to Cincinnati.

For this Musica Sacra "groupie," the tour, the music, the fifty-nine other gypsies have been an inspiration. God's primary revelation in the universe of sky, sun, and all life have been overwhelming. As an artist and a Christian, for me the reaffirmation that we are created by a creator to be creators was given new urgency by taking another hard look at the culture created by my ancestors. It is more than ever clear that among Catholics there will not be a new dawn of faith and sanctity without a cultural revival. We have largely abandoned the actual creation of culture. We are leaving that to secular, materialistic society. Yet creation remains the only real cultural initiative.

JOSEPH SCHICKEL

Joseph Schickel, an artist and designer, lives in Loveland, Ohio.

OF SEVERAL MINDS Edward Gaffney, Jr.

THE VOICE FROM THE PULPIT

SHOULD IT BE TAXED?

In an influential set of lectures in 1974, Professor Harold Berman of Emory Law School wrote: "Law is not only a body of rules; it is people legislating, adjudicating, administering, negotiating—it is a living process of allocating rights and duties and thereby resolving conflicts and creating channels of cooperation. Religion is not only a set of doctrines and exercises; it is people *manifesting* a collective concern for the ultimate meaning and purpose of life—it is a shared intuition of and commitment to transcendent values." If that is what the law is and that is what religion is, it seems plain that in a democracy that cherishes its commitment to pluralism, religion would be one of the guiding influences of the political discourse within which the law takes shape.

Without much regard for the legitimacy of the religious voice in American politics, however, the federal tax code imposes significant restraints on two activities that many religious communities might occasionally wish to engage in: influencing what the law should be and influencing who should make laws. Since 1934, as a condition of their tax-exempt status, religious communities have been forbidden to expend substantial amounts of their resources (how much is "substantial" is ill-defined) in efforts to communicate moral convictions on matters of public concern to elected officials (lobbying activities). Since 1954, an absolute ban has been imposed on their efforts to persuade voters of the correctness of their moral convictions on these matters (electioneering activities).

On April 17—this year's tax day—a church gave the IRS a lawsuit testing the constitutionality of these provisions. The Church at Pierce Creek (New York), an Evangelical Christian church, had lost its exempt status after purchasing full-page ads in newspapers urging Christians not to vote for Bill Clinton in the 1992 presidential campaign. The ads said that some of Clinton's positions were contrary to the biblical views embraced by the church. According to the plaintiff church, the IRS violated the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the spirit of the First Amendment when it revoked the church's exempt status for engaging in this "ministry."

People in our society have a variety of

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views, both political and theological, about the wisdom or folly of such overt participation in politics by a religious community. At one end of the spectrum, for example, Mennonites do not typically seek to shape the political agenda of a world they know from long experience to be corrupt. At the other end of the spectrum, several religious communities have in fact influenced politics and the law, including Roman Catholics. Maybe not always for the better, but at least with the amount of vigor and boldness that they deemed appropriate to their religious self-understandings as they relate to moral issues.

As anyone familiar with the history of slavery and abolitionism knows, the line between religious concerns and political concerns is often a fine one. The same could be said of many of the most dynamic social movements in our country, including women's suffrage and the civil rights movement of the 1960s, which were legitimately inspired and shaped by religious motivation. The boundary between law and religion is thus a fragile and impermanent one, shifting according to the circumstances of particular controversies.

As George W. Gerner reminded us recently ("Catholics and the 'Religious Right,'" *Commonweal*, May 5), Catholics are not exempt as individuals from the political movements and pressures that swirl around us. Neither is the institutional church. Throughout the 1980s the National Conference of Catholic Bishops had to defend against a lawsuit seeking IRS revocation of the church's exempt status because the plaintiffs, known as the Abortion Rights Mobilization, alleged that Catholic pastors had told the laity whom to vote for in the presidential campaign of 1980. The suit was eventually—after nearly a decade of expensive litigation—dismissed on the sensible view that those plaintiffs lacked standing to bring their complaint to resolution by a federal court. Even if the plaintiffs had prevailed on the merits and the church had indeed lost its tax-exempt status, there is not the slightest possibility that the bishops would have budged from their position on abortion. But a lot of us would have had to amend our income tax returns for claiming deductions for gifts to the church.

Does the tax code's total, absolute ban on political campaigning by religious organizations sweep too broadly? The government didn't have to answer that question in the Abortion Rights Mobilization case, where the IRS and the NCCB were on the same side urging dismissal of the plaintiffs' case. Now that the government must defend its own behavior, we can expect that it will maintain that the restraints in the tax code do not violate the First Amendment rights of religious communities. On this view churches are free to speak about anything they like; they just can't do that and enjoy tax-exempt status.

The government may be proving too much. The government may not purchase a person's constitutional rights by giving him or her a welfare benefit, conditioning the receipt of food stamps, say, on the willingness of the beneficiary to refrain from political activity. Similarly, the government may not diminish a church's constitutional rights just because the government has decided not to tax gifts contributed to churches for their religious purposes. Neither the "spending power" nor the "taxing power" is beyond the limit of the First Amendment's command that "Congress shall make *no law*...inhibiting the freedom of speech."

As the federal courts face the question posed in the *Pierce Creek* case, one can hope that they will be guided by the broad protection afforded to political liberties in our democracy, by the venerable tradition of religious involvement in American politics, and by at least one precedent that seems clearly relevant. In *First National Bank of Boston* v. *Bellotti* (1978), the Supreme Court invalidated a Massachusetts statute prohibiting expenditures by banks and other for-profit corporations for the purpose of influencing the vote on referendum proposals on any question "other than one materially affecting any of the property, business, or assets of the corporation." Justice Lewis Powell wrote:

> In the realm of protected speech, the legislature is constitutionally disqualified from dictating the subjects about which persons may speak and the speakers who may address a public issue. If a legislature may direct business corporations to 'stick to business,' it also may limit other corporations—religious, charitable, or civic—to their respective 'business' when addressing the public. Such power in government to channel the expression of views is unacceptable under the First Amendment. Especially where, as here, the legislature's suppression of speech suggests an attempt to give one side of a debatable public question an advantage in expressing its views to the people, the First Amendment is plainly offended. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS Liz Leibold McCloskey

GETTING PRACTICAL ABOUT PEACE

HOW TO BUILD BRIDGES

There are so many people in the world, all with their own webs of relationships, daily struggles, and earnest dreams, that it can get overwhelming when you think about it. Often when I am driving on the highway, my son Brian asks me where everyone is going, and I realize just how many travelers there are. I find I wish I knew a familiar face in a passing car, find I wave more enthusiastically than the situation warrants when I do.

I like knowing people in many places. Something about Alaska feels like home because Patty and Peter live there. Somehow Singapore is not such an alien place because Bradley, Jon, Amelia, and Jack are there. Morocco doesn't seem so strange because of Liz.

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That is why I was happy to be a participant last fall at the World Conference on Religion and Peace Sixth World Assembly in Italy. The idea behind the WCRP is to draw people from all over the world and from different faith traditions, and for the group to be a united voice for peace and understanding. Since its birth in 1970, WCRP has developed a large network of people with a commitment to building human bridges. Before attending the assembly, I was excited but skeptical, thinking I might be spending the week with a lot of "pie-in-the-sky" folks without any grasp of the complexities of conflict and violence. What I found instead came as a welcome surprise: practical people dedicated to concrete steps that ordinary religious people can undertake to build peace.

More than a thousand people attended the gathering; 270 of them were voting delegates. Pope John Paul II and major religious leaders from other traditions opened the ceremonies in Rome. The visual image of the pope sitting with a Muslim youth from South Africa, a Shinto priest from Japan, a Hindu leader from India, a Jewish woman from the United States, and others was quite striking. After the opening ceremony, the assembly moved to Riva del Garda, in the lake region of Northern Italy. There, daily plenary sessions were held with a grand lineup of speakers, including Cardinal Francis Arinze from the Vatican, Gustavo Gutierrez from Peru, Hans Küng from Germany, a high-ranking UN representative, the ecumenical patriarch from Turkey, a former prime minister from Japan, and many others. The youth committee of the WCRP offered a stimulating sideshow. In what at first seemed to be an excessive amount of attention paid to the politics of the assembly proceedings, they ultimately imparted a valuable message to the overall assembly that immediate, concrete actions are more important than assembly declarations.

For me, the most interesting things happened in small groups formed around various themes. I participated in the "Children in Social Conflict" group, a subcommission of the "Children in Conflict" commission. We were all women—from Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, South Africa, Australia, and the U.S.—and we were Buddhists, Christians, Ba'hai, Shinto. It was extraordinary to be in a small room with so many people from different backgrounds, all of whom shared a religious commitment to giving children the best possible chance to live fully and without the fear of violence. Instead of talking vaguely about that fuzzy goal, however, we shared specific strategies about ways religious people can respond to children living amid poverty and violence.

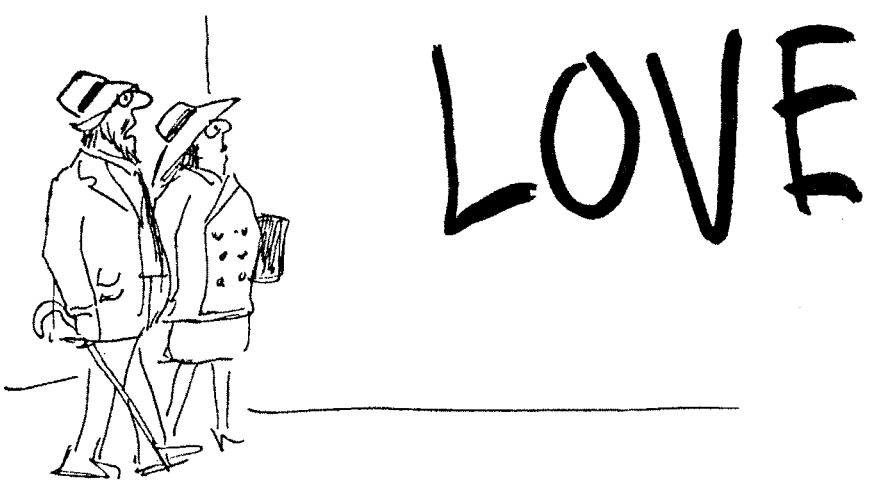
A young Catholic woman from Sri Lanka, Ursula, told of the children's community center that she and a Buddhist woman had founded under the auspices of WCRP. The Children's Center, located in a poor village called Wanathamulle, houses a Montessori preschool, a health clinic, parenting support, and other services for the children's families.

I learned of another sensible effort to respond to violence and misunderstanding, a joint project involving Jewish and Arab physicians who provide medical treatment to children injured in the Bosnian war. Another model of the spirit of cooperation was represented by the residents of Neve Shalom/Wahat As-Salam, a co-operative village located between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv-Jaffa. There, Arabs and Jews live together and their children attend school together. The villagers also run a school for peace in which Arab and Jewish youth and adults learn about one another and come to understand one another.

Spending a week with all these people and experiencing the benefits of their various efforts shrank the world for me. But the effects of the conference go far beyond the personal. For by reducing estrangement, bit by bit, religious people can play an important role in the complex task of peacemaking. We might even find some clues for dealing with the violence raging on our own city streets—and city outskirts.

Reducing estrangement is a part that religious communities can play by bringing people together across some of the great divides in our country. For example, religious leaders in Kansas City, Kansas, and Washington, D.C., have sponsored gang summits in an effort to mediate conflict between gangs, and to promote mutual understanding and respect. I wonder if this and similar approaches couldn't work to diffuse some of the intense political tensions that are breeding divisiveness and hatred in our country these days. There is a movement called Common Ground, which began in Missouri but has spread nationally, which brings together prolife and prochoice activists in an effort to find shared values and concerns. The effect on those involved has been powerful and positive.

Our country's political life is based on the notion that instead of obliterating one's opponents, you face them—on the Senate floor, in the courtroom, in a town meeting—and you talk. In the Senate, as arcane as it may sound, arch opponents still address one another as, "My distinguished colleague." But even this thin veneer of civility and respect seems to be missing in the country at large today. Learning about the reconciliation efforts in other countries, I know there is certainly room for many creative efforts to foster respectful interaction here. □



"I thought that had been phased out."

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THEOLOGY, LAW & WOMEN'S ORDINATION

'ORDINATIO SACERDOTALIS' ONE YEAR LATER

CHARLES DONAHUE, JR.

I write from the point of an historian of law, more particularly of canon law, about John Paul II's apostolic constitution on the ordination of women to the priesthood, *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*, which was issued just a year ago (*see, Commonweal*, June 17, 1994). The document is quite short, eleven paragraphs in the offical English translation, and much of it repeats previous Vatican statements.

The only matter not contained in previous official documents on the topic appears at the end, and it reads:

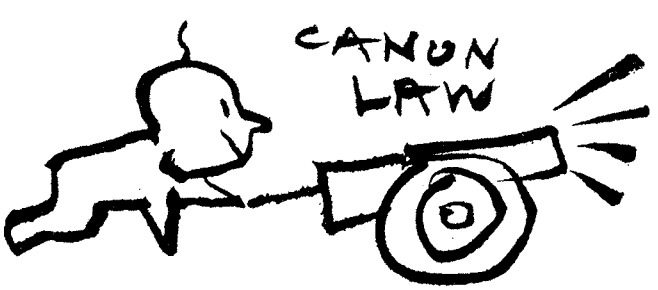
> Although the teaching that priestly ordination is to be reserved to men alone has been preserved by the constant and universal tradition of the church and firmly taught by the magisterium in its more recent documents, at the present time in some places it is nonetheless considered still open to debate, or the church's judgment that women are not to be admitted to ordination is considered to have a merely disciplinary force.
>
> Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren...I declare that the church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is definitively to be held by all the church's faithful.

The first question that a lawyer asks of a document of this sort is what is its status? That turns out to be a difficult question to answer. There seems to be a consensus, reinforced by an interpretive document that was issued with the apostolic constitution, that *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* was not intended to be an infallible statement. Despite the fact that the pope chose the most solemn form of papal document, and despite the fact that he invoked his ministry of confirming the brethren in their faith, he did not employ the language of a solemn *ex cathedra* statement.

There are a number of consequences of the fact that we are not dealing with an infallible teaching, most of them negative. Perhaps the most important from our point of view as believers is that we do not have the guarantee of the Holy Spirit that the teaching is true. From the point of view of the canon lawyer, the most important consequence is that—at least in the view of most canonists—a person who does not adhere to this teaching cannot be said to be guilty of the crime of heresy. Hence whatever Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger meant by the statement quoted by the Vatican radio, but which did not appear in the official commentary, that the constitution "calls us to join in obedience to the faith, and whoever does not do so obviously separates himself from the faith of the church," he could not have meant that such a person was guilty of heresy.

But if this is not an infallible statement, what is it? At a minimum, it is a statement of the ordinary magisterium. Vatican II tells us that "religious submission of will and of mind must be shown in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*."

Pieces of this passage appear in the code of canon law and in the oath that all those who hold office in the church are obliged to take. The words are strong, and the obligation they impose is serious. At the same time, propositions that are not infallibly taught may be wrong. The church cannot require us to give the assent of faith to a proposition that may be wrong on the penalty of excluding us from the communion of the faithful if



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we do not assent. What it can require us to do is to make every effort to accept this proposition, to examine the arguments for it as carefully as we know how, and to see if there are better arguments for it than those which have been proposed. If after all that and if we are convinced that we know enough to hold an opinion on the matter, we may dissent.

Now, Cardinal Ratzinger's remark—while it cannot mean that those who do not adhere to this proposition are heretics—proposes a stronger obligation than I have outlined above. In the official commentary there are indications that this doctrine is irreformable, that it cannot be changed. At least one theologian who specializes in matters of ecclesiology has suggested—perhaps he did not intend to be taken seriously—that this statement may be a new kind of magisterial statement, one that is not infallible but which nonetheless cannot be changed.

That strikes me as a very strange proposition indeed. The fact that a noninfallible statement may be wrong means that it must be possible to change it, if it turns out to be wrong. Perhaps the difficulty lies in the nature of the proposition to which we are asked to give assent. It is not a proposition about women or about "theological anthropology," as Paul VI called it. There is little said in the constitution about women, and what is said is said by way of emphasizing the importance of women's role in the church. The proposition to which we are asked to give assent is a proposition about what can be changed, that the church does not have the power to change its practice with regard to ordaining women to the priesthood. The distinction between the proposition that the church cannot change its practice with regard to the ordination of women and the proposition that it cannot change its views on what it can change with regard to its practices with regard to the ordination of women is a fine one, but it is one that must be maintained. Otherwise, we will end up with a barefoot boy with shoes on, a non-infallible proposition that cannot be changed. This is a topic to which I will return.

Let us now exmaine, as we are obliged to do, the arguments for the proposition of *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*. Central to the argument of the constitution, and of *Inter insigniores*, the document which the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued on the topic in 1976, is the undeniable proposition that Jesus chose only men to be the Apostles. The constitution anticipates the counterargument that this choice was dictated by the cultural conditions of Jesus' time by pointing out that Jesus' behavior toward women generally was quite countercultural. He chose women as disciples. He spoke freely to women, even, much to the disciples' amazement, to the Samaritan woman at the well. There are a number of passages in Scripture that suggest the "sovereignty" of Jesus' choice of apostles.

None of the Apostles were women. As *Inter insigniores* points out, this is striking, because one of the chief functions of the Apostles was to be witnesses to the Resurrection. But the Apostles were not the first witnesses of the Resurrection; the first witnesses of the Resurrection, according to all the Gospel writers, were women. Luke's account of Pentecost would seem to place the Virgin Mary among those who received the Holy Spirit, but she was not commissioned to go out and tell the world about it.

Now these facts certainly don't get us the whole way, but they do give us pieces of the tradition that we cannot just throw away. Any attempt to argue that women can be ordained priests must deal with three undeniable facts in the tradition: that Jesus, whose attitudes and behavior toward women were distinctly countercultural, did not chose any woman to be among the Twelve; that the official witnesses of the Resurrection were all men even though men had not been the first witnesses of the Resurrection; and that both men and women received the Holy Spirit, but only men proclaimed the *kerygma*.

The next part of the argument is difficult. It is only hinted at in *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*, and is not fully elaborated even in the longer *Inter insigniores*. The problem is that there were no priests, as we know them, in apostolic times, nor were there any bishops, as we know them. The notion of an order of bishops as successors to the Apostles probably does not come until the second century. The notion of an order of priests as sharing in the sacerdotal functions of bishops, particularly with regard to the celebration of the Eucharist and the reconciling of those who had lapsed, probably does not come until the early part of the third century.

In order for the argument of the constitution to work, we have to assume that whatever it was that made Jesus choose only men as apostles applies equally well to those who share, though perhaps not fully, in what came to be the order of the Apostles'

Robert C. Jones

If Dr. William Carlos Williams instead of Mr. John Milton Had Written 'Paradise Lost'

THIS IS JUST TO SAY
I have eaten
the apples
that were in
the Garden

and which
you commanded me
not
to taste

Forgive me
they were forbidden
and so sweet

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successors. The missing link in the argument is supplied by *Inter insigniores*, which focuses on the function of the priest as representing Christ when he offers the sacrifice of the Mass. The priest is not just an actor playing the part of Christ; he "is able to act in the person of Christ as head" of the church. Now it is not only that Christ happens to have been a man; it is also that as a man he is the bridegroom of the church which is his bride. For a woman to perform this function would be, to say the least, to get the imagery mixed up.

Inter insigniores is not just more helpful about the missing link in the argument of *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*, it is also considerably fuller and more frank about the tradition. Other than the condemnation of the role that women played among the Gnostics and Montanists, the tradition offers pretty thin pickings; and when the issue is considered in the tradition, many of the arguments that are raised, as *Inter insigniores* admits, would not be accepted today. That the arguments are not fully developed in the tradition, *Inter insigniores* notes, is probably because the question hardly ever came up as a real one. The fact is, however, so far as we can tell, that the church has never ordained women to the priesthood. In this regard, the evidence of the tradition is quite different from that on another issue about the priesthood that is debated today, the ordination of married men to the priesthood. But the witness of the tradition on the topic of the exclusion of women from the priesthood is, by and large, a witness of practice, not of teaching. The silence is broken only occasionally by arguments that are, in large measure, embarrassing. The witness of Scripture is also a witness of silence. Again so far as we can tell, Jesus never said anything about why he had not chosen any women to be apostles. We are left to infer from his actions what that might mean.

So far the argument. What can a historian say about it? The first thing that one might say is that it is not the first time that the issue has been raised about what Jesus' practice means for the ongoing church, particularly in areas about which he seems to have said little or where what he said was ambiguous. There was one other characteristic of the Twelve that was probably even more noticeable to contemporaries than was the fact that they were all men: they were all Jews. Very early in the church, so early that the debates are reported in the New Testament, it was argued that in order to become a follower of Jesus one had to become a Jew. That meant that a male Gentile convert would have to be circumcised and that all converts would have to follow Jewish law. As reported in Acts 15, the Holy Spirit and the Council of Jerusalem decided that male Gentile converts did not have to be circumcised and that all Gentile converts had to follow only a quite modified version of Jewish law. It took some time for this decision to be accepted. But once the decision was accepted, it never seems to have been doubted that a Gentile convert who was not circumcised could exercise any ministry in the church, including that of bishop.

Now there can be little doubt that the decisions of the Council of Jerusalem were momentous ones, that Peter and Paul were sharply divided on at least parts of the issue, and that Christian communities remained divided for some time on the subject. There was also little in what Jesus said that offered much guidance on the issue and quite a bit in what Jesus did that suggested an answer contrary to the one that the council reached. Yet the council felt that the Holy Spirit had given it the authority to do what it did, and the church ultimately accepted it. Today we would probably say that the proposition that one does not have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian has been so widely and so consistently taught that it is an infallible teaching of the ordinary and universal magisterium.

The second observation that a historian might make about the argument of *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* is that self-denying ordinances, ordinances that say that the church has no power to do something, do not have a good track record. Let me take some examples from the history of the sacrament of marriage. That Jesus taught that marriages are indissoluble seems virtually certain. That Saint Paul taught that, despite what Jesus had said, a convert to Christianity who could not live with his or her pagan spouse in peace could divorce that spouse and marry a Christian also seems virtually certain. Today, this is the "Pauline privilege" that routinely allows nonsacramental marriages to be dissolved "in favor of the faith."

That Pope Innocent III in the early thirteenth century refused to dissolve unconsummated marriages unless one of the parties chose to enter the religious life is certain. But canonists and theologians told the popes throughout the Middle Ages that the power of the keys extended to all unconsummated marriages. Today, of course, dissolutions of unconsummated marriages are routinely granted by the papacy.

The present code of canon law says that a consummated sacramental marriage cannot be dissolved by any human power or for any reason other than death. The granting of an annulment involves a declaration that a sacramental marriage never existed. The torturing of the normal definition of marriage that is involved in some annulment cases is a cause of scandal, at least to some. This has led some authors to suggest that perhaps the power of the papacy is not a human power. Perhaps the papacy has the power to dispense even from divine law. This argument is not new. It was made relatively frequently in the Middle Ages when discussing the plenitude of power, the *plenitudo potestatis*, of the papacy, though rarely in the context of consummated sacramental marriages.

The declaration that the church has no power to ordain women is not only a self-denying ordinance, it is also an ordinance about a particular aspect of a sacrament, the capacity to receive it. Again the tortured history of the theology and law of marriage provides some analogies that suggest a different result. In the twelfth century it came to be held that the essence of the sacrament of marriage consisted in the free exchange of present consent between a Christian man and woman capable of marrying each other. From these definitions followed the rule that the validity of the sacrament could not depend on the presence or blessing of a priest or even the presence of witnesses. The couple were the ministers of the sacrament.

One can imagine the practical difficulties that such a rule en-

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tailed, but it was the law of the church from the late twelfth century until the middle of the sixteenth. Partly as a result of these difficulties and partly as a result of the criticisms of the Reformers, the Council of Trent was under considerable pressure to change the rule. A number of bishops argued, however, that the church could not change the rule. Having arrived at the notion that the essence of the sacrament consisted in the free exchange of consent between the parties, this doctrine, they argued, was irreformable. It was always part of the deposit of faith, although full awareness of it had come only relatively late.

The council agreed with the traditionalists, at least to some extent. Those that said that clandestine marriages made by free consent of the parties were void were condemned by anathemas. On the other hand, questions of capacity to exchange that consent were matters within the power of the church to change. So what the council did was to declare that, subsequent to the promulgation of the decrees of the council in their parishes, couples would have the capacity to contract marriage only in the presence of their parish priest and two or three witnesses. This "Tridentine form" of marriage remains with us, with some modifications, to this day, and if not dispensed, it is required for the validity of a marriage.

So far we have not suggested that the arguments of *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* are wrong. What we have said is that in the light of historical reflection, they are different from what the church has done and taught in other areas that might be regarded as similar. The theme on which we have focused is the broad authority that the church has felt that it has in the area of what we might call sacramental practice.

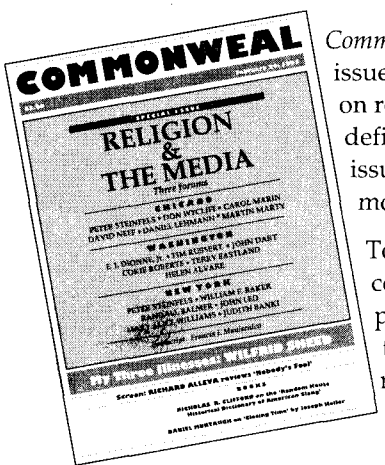
So far, too, we have said little that could be regarded as out of the mainstream. What I am about to say is not standard, though it rests on history that is well known. I offer it not only as my third and last historical reflection, but also as a way of thinking about *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* that may go some of the way toward reconciling the unease that many of us feel about it with the pope's obvious unease about contemplating changes in this field.

The magisterium is broader than those things which can become infallible. The teaching on artificial birth control is clearly a statement of the magisterium, though many would argue that it cannot be made infallible. The church can also make binding rules about topics which cannot be made matters for the magisterium because they are too far away from anything that might be said to be revealed. Under the current theory of church law, such rules, even if made by the pope, cannot be made irreformable because the current pope has no power to bind future popes. Otherwise he could deprive future popes of the plenitude of power which all popes possess. In secular law this is the theory of sovereignty, and it turns out that the secular theory is largely an invention of medieval canonists, developed in the context of thinking about papal power.

A striking illustration of the operations of this principle occurred recently in the debates with the followers of Archbishop Lefebvre. They argued that the Mass of Pius V, the so-called Tridentine Mass, could not be changed because when Pius V promulgated the Mass he said that no one could change it. The present pope in condemning the Lefebvrists at least implicitly held that no pope could bind future popes not to make liturgical changes, particularly when an ecumenical council of the church had urged the changes.

Now if the pope were attempting to make irreformable a matter of church law which was not a matter of revelation, then

Religion & the Media



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he would be doing just what Lefebvrists argued that Pius V had done. That is why *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* insists that the rule against the ordination of women is of divine origin. But as we have seen, that argument is the weakest of the arguments in the apostolic constitution. It may be that further support will be found for the argument. But let us suppose, at least as a thought-experiment, that the proposition fails, that this non-infallible statement turns out to be wrong in this respect. Does that mean that the next pope could change the rule?

When *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* was announced the conservative archbishop of Bologna was quoted in the press as having said: "Of course, the church cannot ordain women. It cannot ordain women anymore than it could consecrate crackers and Coke instead of bread and wine." The remark was flippant, but it raises an interesting point. Jesus consecrated bread and wine; so far as we can tell consecrating bread and wine has been the universal practice of the church since that time. Is there anything about the nature of the sacrament that requires that bread and wine be used? Suppose, for example, that the bishops in the Far East asked permission to consecrate rice cakes and rice wine instead of wheat bread and grape wine, on the ground that rice was far more meaningful to the people of their region. Could the church authorize this?

With due deference to higher authority, I think that the power is there to make the change. But it would not come easily. The long tradition of the church and the link between bread and wine and the Passover *hagaddah* would be cited in opposition. This is not something that would happen simply because it was requested. There would be long debates. Perhaps the matter would be referred to a church council. Certainly, the bishops would be consulted. It would take a long time. Ultimately, however, if the pastoral reasons persisted, if the faithful really wanted it, if the bishops supported it, if the church saw the power of the argument that symbols must be dressed in different cultural clothing in order to have meaning, the change could be made.

What we have just described might be analogized to what we call constitutional law in our legal system. It can be changed by authoritative interpretation. Such change normally takes a long time—decades, even generations. The law does yield to contemporary pressures, to new arguments, to changes in society, but it yields slowly. The analogy is not perfect because the American Constitution can be amended. My focus here, however, is on the way that constitutional law proceeds when there is no amendment.

Perhaps what the pope is looking for is not a new type of exercise of the magisterium but a new understanding of certain kinds of church law. Some place in the process of developing the notion that the pope was sovereign within the church with regard to law, we forgot an older notion of law, in which law was immanent in the practice of the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The law about the ordination of women, we might suggest, stands at that awkward intersection point between discipline, which can be changed tomorrow if the proper authority wills it, and the infallible propositions of the magisterium, which cannot be changed at all.

The church has never ordained women to the priesthood. When the arguments supporting the practice are examined, they are not overwhelmingly powerful, and historically they were mixed with arguments that are downright bad. But there are arguments in favor of the practice of not ordaining women, and the practice is of venerable antiquity. We operate in tradition. Anything that has been done so consistently in the tradition is quite remarkable, because so little has been able to maintain itself over all the changes of the past 2000 years. The arguments in favor of the ordination of women—which we have not been able to examine—are mostly of quite recent vintage. Traditional churches that have ordained women have experienced considerable disruption in doing so.

The constitution, in the American sense, of the church is old and carries with it a great deal of the tradition. The constitution of the church can be changed, except for a few absolute basics, but it cannot be changed quickly. When changes come, they tend to come in ways that leave the principles unimpaired, but their practical operations quite different. In this regard, we might recall that there were periods in the church's history when deacons played a far greater role than they do today, and there is nothing in *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* that speaks of the ordination of deacons. We might also recall that the distinction between the power of orders and the power of jurisdiction is very old, and that there is little to prevent the separation of the two, particularly when we are operating at a level below that of the episcopacy.

This last argument was based on the assumption that ulti-

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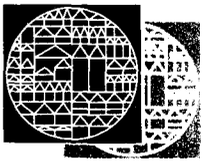

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mately the proposition that Jesus commanded that there be only male priests in his church would fail. Let us now suppose that the proposition about revelation proves to be more powerful. Does this mean that my analogy to American constitutional law must fail?

Currently in the church we make a sharp distinction between legislation and the magisterium. The magisterium is about what is revealed and things that are necessarily entailed in things that are revealed. Legislation, on the other hand, like American constitutional law, is a human product, and those who have the authority can change it. Neither the pope, nor an ecumenical council, nor the universal church can change revelation. It is not our job to change it but to figure out what it is.

My quarrel is not with the proposition that revelation cannot be changed, but with the implication that follows from the distinction between the magisterium and legislation, namely that law and legal methods of interpretation are inappropriate when dealing with revelation. The striking use that both Paul VI and John Paul II made of the word "constitution" in writing about our issue suggests that both popes recognized that the rule about the male priesthood is a matter of law. In the tradition of the church, law is not just a matter of discipline, not just a matter of the will of a human legislator. In the tradition of the church, law is also found in revelation, and that law, the product of divine reason as well as divine will, is accessible to human reason and hence to legal methods of interpretation.

But if we are to encompass within our notion of the law of the church matters more fundamental than how a priest gets his job or when we celebrate a given feast, we are going to have to go back and pick up a development that was, for the most part, sidetracked in the sixteenth century when church lawyers were tamed because of the disaster that they produced in the name of conciliarism. Perhaps we will have to go back further, to the thirteenth century, when law and theology became separate disciplines. In order to do this, we are going to have to study how other religious traditions make use of law, to revisit our understanding of just what happened at the Council of Jerusalem, and to take seriously the modern biblical scholars who deny that there is a fundamental antinomianism (that is, a complete separation of faith and law) in either the sayings of Jesus or in Saint Paul. In short, we are going to have to reintegrate a great deal of theology into our understanding of law.

All of this, obviously, takes us far beyond the topic of the ordination of women, but if one can see where the road might lead, perhaps one can see why I think that the current situation with regard to the ordination of women has reached a dead-end. We have to go back and rethink what we mean by faith and what we mean by law. I hope I have given a glimpse of how it is that one might say—and still remain true to the tradition—that the rule about the ordination of women is not a matter of faith, at least in the normal sense of that term. It is a matter of law. But the fact that it is a matter of law does not necessarily mean that it can be changed, and it certainly does not mean that it can be changed easily. □

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WHERE ATHEISTS WALK ON COALS

COUNTERCULTURAL IN INDIA

ROBERT WORTH

"They are firm in their Islam," said the man dressed in white Indian khadi, nodding at the house of his Muslim neighbors and smiling crookedly. "They are firm in their Christianity," he continued, pointing toward the Catholic seminary down the road. "And we, we are firm in our atheism." He opened his arms to the low, thatched roofs of the Atheist Center, in the south Indian city of Vijayawada, of which he—a man known as Lavanam—is director. I had just arrived. It seemed a good moment to tell Lavanam about the results of a recent Gallup survey: Indians grant religion more importance than any other people on earth. "Yes, that is so," he said sadly, bobbing his head side-to-side Stevie Wonder-fashion, as South Indians often do. We were standing outside the center's low-slung huts in the shade of a coconut tree. "You see, philosophically, atheism has been there in India from the beginning. Practically...well, not so much."

Not so much is an understatement. New religions sprout like weeds in India. After the March elections, the Hindu nationalist Shiv Sena and BJP are once again poised to take over the government. In the north, terrorist groups trade hostages and gunfire in the name of God. Even ardent "secularists" like Indira Gandhi are transformed, in the popular mind, into Hindu mystics. I had heard tirades, on the train down from Delhi, about my own country's appalling lack of spirituality.

"Come," said Lavanam, "you will be hungry." I was very hungry. I had just spent twenty-four hours on the Grand Trunk Express from Delhi, eating only an orange and a can of almonds: pilgrim fare, in a sense. I had come to find out what third-world atheism was all about. Lavanam led me through bright morning sunlight into a hut where five or six bodies lay wrapped in brown blankets, sleeping. At a wooden table someone was putting *idli*—rice cakes—onto a plate for me. A television flickered near the window, playing the morning news in Telugu. On the wall was a picture of Gandhi at his spinning-wheel. This was Atheist Center headquarters, Lavanam said, and they ran it Indian-style: lots of labor, very little money.

"We try to arrange intercaste marriages," Lavanam told me. "We provide cosmopolitan dinners, much mixing. Mostly we provide education." We were joined now by an American, a gaunt scholar dressed in white Indian khadi with a ragged white beard and feverish eyes. He was here helping Lavanam to write a book about Gandhi and atheism, he said. Gandhi had wanted to abolish untouchability—the vilest part of the Hindu caste system—but the Atheist Center takes it further: they want to abolish caste and all of its religious underpinning.

At the bottom of the Indian caste ladder are the Harijans, or as they now prefer to be called, Dalits: the poorest, "untouchable" caste. In the villages of rural Nizamabad, not far from Vijayawada, poor Dalit families are often forced by debt to sacrifice a daughter as a jogin, or temple prostitute. She becomes a virtual slave of the village landlord, and she has to beg to feed her children, to whom the landlord owes nothing. There are some 20,000 of these women in Andhra Pradesh alone, despite the Atheist Center's success in forcing the state government to outlaw the practice. Lavanam's wife showed me pictures of the jogins: bright eyes glancing fearfully at the camera, or staring ashamedly at the ground. In one picture a beautiful young former jogin was smiling, her head wrapped in a golden shawl, with a man sitting next to her, and a banner over their heads: LAKSHMI WEDS SHANKAR.

What can atheism mean to the villagers—mostly illiterate—who comprise 80 percent of India's population? I found one answer in the Atheist Center's Science Museum—an effort to compress five hundred years of intellectual history into a few easy lessons. Most of the exhibits were once used by fakirs to demonstrate miracles. Now they are used to demonstrate the laws of physics. There were marbles that run in loops once they have sufficient momentum; grooved and tapered runners that carry balls uphill, temporarily overcoming gravity; wooden puppets with levers; human bones, to dispel the fear of ghostly possession. Sometimes the Atheist Center hosts firewalking events, inviting villagers to walk over the hot coals and to refute the guru Sai Baba, who used to claim it was only possible through a holy miracle. My favorite piece of atheism was a poster, designed to explain a certain natural miracle to credulous villagers. It was a picture of a young man and woman with a baby, and below them the words "Who Is Responsible?" To the right were three blank boxes, each aligned with a word: first GOD, then WOMAN, and finally MAN, with a big red check mark through his box. At the bottom of the poster, in large print, were the words: YES. IT'S A SCIENTIFIC FACT.

ROBERT WORTH, *a frequent* Commonweal *contributor, is a graduate student in English at Princeton University.*

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The Atheist Center was founded in 1940 by G. Ramachandra Rao, a university professor who adopted the name Gora for himself and tried to win Gandhi over to atheism. His children, who now run the center, all have nonreligious names derived from political events in the year of their birth: Lavanam, for instance, means salt, for Gandhi's 1930 Salt March. You can learn all this from the countless pamphlets the Atheists print on an old-fashioned, movable-type printing press. Lavanam's twenty-two year-old nephew Vikas, who plays in a heavy metal band in Hyderabad, handed me "Positive Atheism," followed by "We Become Atheists," "An Atheist with Gandhi," and "The Atheist Golden Jubilee." Then there was the periodical *The Atheist*—dozens of issues, with hopeful epigrams on the cover: "Atheism Has Bright Future!" and "Victory to Humans!"

The Atheist literature is a strange blend of Enlightenment rationalism ("I came to the conclusion that it was man that made god out of psychological necessity in primitive times," writes Gora) and Gandhian progressivism. One of Gora's early associates was the Indian economist, J. C. Kumarappa, who pioneered the modern cult of "sustainable development." But the keynote of Gora's prose is a majestic confidence that the death of god leads directly to moral and political solutions: "The problem before atheists is to find out a method by which economic equality is achieved while preserving the freedom of the individual. That is, taking democracy and socialism together." Never mind the cold war, remove god and the flood of loving kindness surrounds us all. The really strange part is that after a few days among the atheists you start to believe it. Without ever articulating it very clearly, the atheists enact a belief that the moral impulse flowers best without ritual or doctrine. And it is contagious.

The next day Lavanam, known in the pamphlets as "the Good-Will Ambassador of Atheism," went to Bangalore to spread the good news. His brother, Vijayam ("Success"—the Congress party succeeded in the 1937 elections), took me to the village of Srikakulum, where his youngest sister, Nao ("Number Nine"—nothing interesting happened that year, they told me, but she was the ninth child), runs a school. We went by Jeep, on narrow roads full of bullock carts stacked high with fresh-cut sugar cane. We passed through tiny villages, and after an hour or so the road dwindled to a deeply rutted mud trail. The Jeep was jumping up and down like a mad water buffalo, and I was about to beg for mercy when Vijayam turned to me, smiling sweetly, and said that Princess Anne had come out to the school on this road, in 1985. I kept quiet. And it was true: I found her signature later that day in the guest book, the one word sweeping across an entire page in florid script. They gave me a tour of the school, and afterwards we sat on the porch sipping tea. The children had gone home. It was a lovely school, I said. And the curriculum here...was it—well, you know—

"—Atheist? Oh yes," said Vijayam, nodding vigorously: "very atheist."

Back at the Atheist Center, I was greeted with warm, unchristian hospitality and plenty of head-bobbing. I began to feel ashamed of myself: these people were all educated, but doing the selfless work of nuns or saintly women like Mother Teresa. They did it all in the name of atheism, and they did it with smiles on their faces. Would I be attending the World Atheist Conference, they asked, to be held in Vijayawada in January 1996? I was welcome! Thousands of atheists would be coming, from all over the world! I said I would try. □

ART

ANDRES SERRANO IN VIEW

ICON MAKER OR BREAKER?

A retrospective exhibit is usually a milestone in an artist's career: a gathering together of years of work, and a message sent to the art world and the culture at large that the artist has claimed a place altogether his or her own. But *Andres Serrano: Works 1983–93*, which closed in April at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York City, had the feel of a postscript to the 1989 controversy over the National Endowment of the Arts. That year, of course, Serrano's photograph "Piss Christ," which depicts a crucifix immersed in urine, became an exhibit in the congressional debate about whether the agency should support artists (such as Serrano, a grant recipient) whose work scorns the standards of common decency thought to be shared by the taxpayers who support the agency. The controversy prompted the NEA's directors to insert an anti-obscenity clause in the grant guidelines, and led legislators to raise hard questions—now being raised again—about whether the agency should be scrapped altogether.

So while the Serrano retrospective was a summing-up so far, it was also a justification of sorts, an attempt to ground the artist's reputation in something deeper than notoriety, even as that notoriety was a justification for the exhibit. The bright light of controversy shone all through the show, lending it an aura of danger and subversion which the artist and the museum invited and made the most of; at the same time, it gave the exhibit an accessible, even populist, character of the kind that conservative critics often lament is missing from contemporary art.

In the museum lobby, a documentary about the artist was played continuously on an overhead television set ("His work is not in any way didactic," the voice-over pronounced as I walked in), drawing a crowd at least as large as that in the galleries. The work on display inside depicted subjects (guns, homeless people, Klansmen, corpses in morgues, as well as religious figures and bodily fluids) that have long since been deemed controversial, and did so in a medium (Cibachrome color photographs) familiar to the viewer's eye from advertising.

Controversy is in no way a distraction from Serrano's work. Rather—and this is what most riled his critics in Congress—it is the work's fulfillment. Serrano describes

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himself not as a photographer but "a conceptual artist with a camera," and, as with much conceptual art, his photographs depend to an unusual degree on extravisual information to make them intelligible and interesting. On one wall hung abstractions suggesting, in turn, a smoldering volcano, the Japanese flag, a Georgia O'Keeffe flower, a Barnett Newman color field; from the tags one learned that they were compositions of blood, milk, and urine. A gauzy white splatter arcing across the photographic field was revealed as ejaculate. A series of photographs that might have been drawn from the ad campaign for a Gap line of grunge clothing turned out to be portraits of homeless people.

In these photographs, Serrano's basic strategy is to reverse the conventions usually applied to the subject. Bodily fluids—what could be more realistic?—are made abstract; homeless people—the subjects of countless documentary photographs—are granted the sort of stylized sittings usually reserved for actresses and presidents. The "Morgue" series, for example, depicts freshly dead bodies in close-ups of high color and relentless clarity in which all the medical apparatus has been carefully screened out. And a series of portraits of Klan members, while powerfully iconic, gains its greatest effects from Serrano's attention to the coarse weave of the Klan robes and the crow's-feet of a Klanswoman's eye peering out from her hood.

Even as they provoke the viewer's curiosity through their treatment of controversial subjects, these photographs assume a certain familiarity with the photographic tradition whose terms they alter and refer to—with the work of Walker Evans, Paul Strand, Tina Barney, and the like. But Serrano's religious photographs also negotiate with a tradition that is longer and broader, yet more remote. Just as Serrano is a photographer who is not a photographer, he describes himself as "a former Catholic...who even today is not opposed to being called a Christian."

This paradoxical information complicates the religious images and the commentary that swirls around them. Sure enough, the critic who reviewed the exhibit for the *New York Times* suggested that "it may be as a religious artist, and specifically as a Roman Catholic artist, that Mr. Serrano makes the most sense." Where once an artist like James Joyce generated artistic tension through frank acknowledgments of apostasy, today an artist like Serrano does so through an unexpected assertion of his Catholic identity—by claiming, like Martin Luther, in effect, that he has not left the church and its artistic tradition so much as the church has left him.

In the most powerful of the religious photographs, the tension between tradition and propaganda is sharp and evocative. One of them is "Piss Christ." I remember the first time I saw the photograph, at the Saatchi Collection in London in 1991. I had read about it in accounts of the controversy, of course—and doubtless had seen it reproduced in black-and-white—but I had the impression that Serrano was a prolific photographer, the creator of hundreds of images on religious subjects. Here in a corner of the gallery was a crucifixion, and it was one of the most powerful contemporary religious images I had ever seen. The golden hue that suffuses the photograph had just the right touch of apocalypse, the crucifix just the right tilt to suggest windswept, earthshaking drama; for a moment—contrary to what Serrano intended—the nature of that golden hue was hardly relevant. A related photograph, the crucifix smaller against a horizontal golden ground, was even more powerful; it suggested Giacometti, yes, but more than that it suggested Golgotha at the moment the heavens were rent. Only as I leaned forward to look at the tags did I realize that these were the notorious photographs. And of course the extravisual information made it necessary to try to see them all over again. For if it would be unfair to condemn an image without knowing essential information such as its title and materials, so it would be unfair to judge it beautiful based on its visual qualities alone. Well, blasphemous or no? I decided the latter, if only to avoid being manipulated by the photograph and its detractors alike.

Most of Serrano's other religious images are considerably less effective. "Heaven and Hell" (1984), which depicts a bishop figure indifferently looking away from a nude, mutilated woman, is sheer agitprop; "Pieta" (1985), in which a Mary holds a giant fish, and "Blood Cross" (1985), a plexiglas cross filled with blood, are ineffectual visual puns. And the "Church" series of 1991 seems overwhelmed by the sense of mission the NEA controversy must have inspired in Serrano. It is a series of portraits of French religious figures. A nun wearing an overstarched wimple—and bright red lipstick—gazes at the camera, fresh-faced and clear-eyed as Jodie Foster; a priest bites his lip, wearing a super-orthodox, all-the-way-round-the-neck white collar. The figures cannot bear the weight of the iconic status that Serrano has thrust upon them.

The priest who sat for Serrano, it happened, was wearing glasses with whorled plastic rims, the sort of traditional but up-to-date glasses that one might buy at Sterling Optical. To me they were the most striking detail in the whole exhibit. They reminded me that this figure was not an icon, after all, but a man who is a priest. I had to ask myself: Had I ever seen an art photograph of a priest before? If so, I couldn't recall it. And this suggested to me just how deep the controversy over Serrano's work really is. It is not only a conflict of values and standards, a conflict between religious tradition and the avant-garde; it is an argument in which the crucial middle term—that is, contemporary visual art that does in one way or another frankly embody religious standards and expectations—is all but absent. (Quick, try to think of a noted religious artist. See?)

Is Andres Serrano a genuine religious artist, or a sham one? How might we judge? Not only is there no authoritative definition of just what a Christian artist might be; there is very little contemporary religious art of any prominence with which Serrano's might be compared. Lucky for him—and not so lucky for us—the religious is territory that he, for the time being, has claimed as his own.

PAUL ELIE

Paul Elie, editor of A Tremor of Bliss: Contemporary Writers on the Saints *(Harcourt Brace & Company), is a frequent* Commonweal *contributor.*

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François Mauriac's 'Woman of the Pharisees'

DAVID O'CONNELL

François Mauriac's *La Pharisienne* (*Woman of the Pharisees*) was the 1952 Nobel laureate's longest and most ambitious work of fiction. It stands out among all his novels for three principal reasons. First, Mauriac had been irritated by critics during the '30s who claimed that his novels were too short. This was the era of the cycle novel, or *roman fleuve*, which developed in detail a large number of characters and followed their evolution through many volumes. Mauriac claimed in several newspaper articles of the day that he was indifferent to such criticism, but during the '30s each of his novels nevertheless became longer and longer, culminating in *Woman of the Pharisees.*

Second, Mauriac had been stung by a vicious attack by a young and as yet largely unknown writer named Jean-Paul Sartre who, in the pages of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* in February 1939, accused him of interfering with the "freedom" of his characters. Sartre's principal target was Mauriac's 1935 novel *La Fin de la nuit* (*The End of the Night*) in which he brought back to life the character of Thérèse Desqueyroux, the heroine of an earlier novel. In an ill-advised foreword to the novel, Mauriac informed his readers that he wanted to "save" Thérèse. This is all Sartre needed to go for the jugular. He accused Mauriac of playing God with his characters and concluded with the comment, very damaging to Mauriac at the time, that "...God is not an artist, but neither is François Mauriac."

The third reason why *La Pharisienne* was unique is that Mauriac used it to push to the limit his own investigation of the Catholic spiritual life as the essential material of a novel. In a sense, the subject of the novel is "what does it mean to be a Catholic and to strive for holiness within the Catholic tradition?"

> *In the evening of her life, Brigitte Pian had come to the knowledge that it was useless to play the part of a proud servitor eager to impress his master by a show of readiness to repay his debts to the last farthing. It had been revealed to her that our Father does not ask us to give a scrupulous account of what merits we can claim. She understood at last that it is not our deserts that matter but our love.*
>
> —François Mauriac
> *Woman of the Pharisees*

This fictional project, unique in these three ways, added one last ingredient that had also been absent from all his previous work: concentration of effort and unity of focus. Whereas all his novels before and after had to compete for time with other endeavors like nonfiction books, journalism, political polemics, and the other chores incumbent upon the *homme de lettres* in the French tradition, *Woman of the Pharisees* was written while Mauriac was a virtual prisoner in his own house. Begun in July 1940 and completed by January 1941, the novel was written as Mauriac and his family watched and waited to see what was going to happen after the calamitous fall of France in June 1940. To make matters worse, a German officer and his orderlies were billeted in Mauriac's home at Malagar, about twenty-five miles from Bordeaux.

Published in unusual circumstances in 1941, the novel was not even reviewed. The Vichy authorities saw to that. Then, after the war, since the Catholic novel as a genre was undergoing important changes, it was not easy to appreciate the debt that was owed to this particular work. With hindsight, however, we can see and appreciate its true importance.

The Catholic novel in France reached its apogee in the '30s with the publication of a series of masterpieces by Mauriac (1885-1970) and Georges Bernanos (1884-1948). Each novelist stressed an interior piety and conversion in the manner of pre-Vatican II vertical spirituality, that privileged a direct and private relationship between man and God, as did the Latin Mass, Benediction, and the Stations of the Cross. Mauriac's *Noeud de vipères* (*Vipers' Tangle*) in 1933 and Bernanos's *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (*Diary of a Country Priest*) in 1936, are true and lasting masterpieces. Each recounts the protagonist's private faith journey and culminates in his death. In each case, the reader can feel fairly certain that the hero has made it safely to heaven.

World War II exerted a powerful influence on the Catholic novel in France. After the war, new writers, from a younger generation, like Gilbert Cesbron (1913–79) or Michel de Saint Pierre (1916–87), among others, were less concerned about the Christian's relationship to God than to the world and his fellow man. Cesbron's *Les Saints vont en enfer* (*Saints in Hell*, 1952) dealt with the worker priests of the day. Likewise, Saint Pierre's *Les Nouveaux Aristocrates* (*The New Aristocrats*, 1963) studied the faith and morals of young Catholic boys in a Jesuit secondary school of the 1950s, while his controversial novel *Les Nouveaux Prêtres* (*The New Priests*, 1966) ostensibly attacked the "new priests" emerging in the wake of Vatican II. Ironically, however, so many concessions are made to the energy of the newfound apostolic spirit, that the author's apparent hostility toward certain aspects of Vatican II seemed to achieve just the opposite ef-

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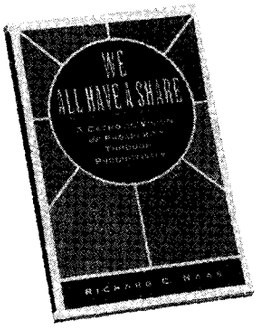

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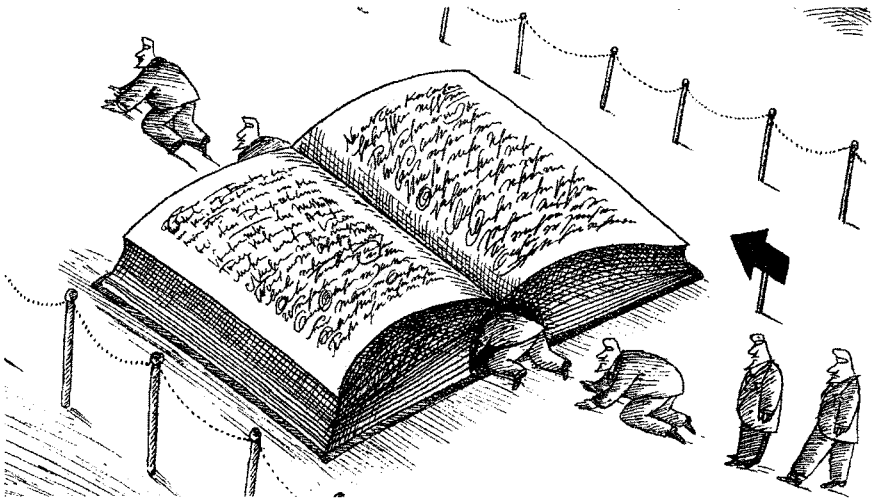

fects. In any case, the emphasis in both these postwar works was on the new horizontal spirituality. The characters find God principally through other men and women. This tendency in the postwar French Catholic novel is especially interesting because it predates and, in a number of ways, announces Vatican II, paralleling the "*nouvelle théologie*" of thinkers like the Dominican Yves Congar and the Jesuits Henri de Lubac and Jean Danielou, whose views eventually triumphed at the council.

This rupture within the genre of the Catholic novel, which represents a clear break with the past, has received little scholarly attention. I would suggest that there is a "missing link" that helps explain how the Catholic novel made the leap from an emphasis on a search for God within oneself to a quest for the divine in engagement with others.

To be sure, the war and German occupation exerted an enormous influence on the French people as a whole. The humiliating defeat of 1940 was followed by the enforced billeting of German soldiers in French homes, and the absence of hundreds of thousands of French men, first as prisoners of war and then as "volunteers" in German factories as a part of the STO (*Service du Travail Obligatoire*) program. Finally, there was the deportation, based on Vichy's racial laws, of tens of thousands of Jews to the East. Never before had so many families been radically broken apart, and never had so many people experienced incarceration, or at the very least immobility, in one form or another. In the aftermath of these dislocations, it is easy to understand why existentialism with its emphasis on "freedom" and "responsibility" had such an appeal. The Catholic novel, in its own way, reflected these concerns.

Woman of the Pharisees, which is what I would call the quintessential pre-Vatican II Catholic novel of vertical spirituality, may in fact be the missing link. Mauriac wrote the novel with his mother, Claire, clearly in mind. She is reincarnated in the novel's heroine, Brigitte Pian. Claire Mauriac, as a widow, had raised her five children, François being the youngest, in the most austere and restrictive of Jansenist straitjackets. In the novel, Brigitte's stepson, Louis Pian, recounts many years later, events that had taken place in the early '20s revolving around his stepmother's interference in the private life of his sister, Michele Pian, her manipulation of a certain M. Puybaraud, an ex-seminarian and penurious catechism teacher who depends upon her monthly allowance to make ends meet (and who incurs her wrath when he announces to her his plans to marry), and the local priest, the abbé Calou.

The novel investigates in minute detail the inner workings of the mind of Brigitte Pian as a pharisee. The pharisee, to Mauriac, is not a hypocrite, like Molière's Tartuffe. On the contrary, she is totally sincere and utterly convinced that she is carrying out God's will and doing his work. It is this conviction, of course, that accounts for her strength—and also makes her so potentially dangerous to those around her. Since the pharisee thinks she knows better than other people what is good for them, she does not suffer correction easily. Indeed, she offers up to God her sufferings from the rebukes received from those bridling at her domineering ways. Mauriac touches the heights of irony as Louis Pian accuses his stepmother of pharisaism at the same time as the reader is coming to the conclusion that he too has the same faults. Finally, on another level, the novel can be read as reaching the epitome of this vertical spiritual structuring when we realize that Mauriac himself, as a novelist and as a Catholic with a public, indeed almost "official" allegiance to Catholicism, is also asking himself the question, as he writes the novel: "Am I too a pharisee?"

How this novel of vertical spirituality was received in Occupied France in 1941 is especially revealing. Mauriac intended *Woman of the Pharisees* to be his most fully developed "*roman catholique*." It was read, however, as a "*roman de l'Occupation*." (Since what would later be called the *Résistance* had not yet begun, and since the overwhelming majority of the French population still had an *attentiste* wait-and-see attitude in 1941 and disapproved of armed attacks by French civilians against Germans in uniform, we cannot quite call it a *roman de la Résistance*. This is a separate literary genre, which comes into being in 1943.)

Mauriac's novel struck a vibrant and sympathetic chord among the wavering French public. As proof of this, one need only cite its remarkable sales figure of 35,000 in the first four months of publication. At a time when paper was strictly rationed and people could not spend their money without thinking twice, this was a remarkable achievement. Its widespread appeal was realized despite attempts by the Vichy authorities to squelch the novel. The collaborationists immediately recognized *Woman of the Pharisees* as an attack upon them, their authority, and their way of governing. They put out the word—and effectively enforced it—that the press was not to review the novel. In fact, mention in print of Mauriac's name or novel was prohibited.

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In his voluminous ten-volume diary, Claude Mauriac, the oldest son of François Mauriac, recounts how, in June 1941, someone had explained the boycott to him. But perhaps of even greater interest for us is another entry in Claude's diary from several months earlier, after his father had read several chapters aloud to the family. Mauriac commented at that time that the novel was "bold," and not at all "in keeping with the thinking of the New France." His suspicion, in the dark days of the winter of 1940-41, that a political reading of the novel might prove irresistible was confirmed by the positive reaction of the public the following spring.

For Mauriac *Pharisees* was of necessity refracted through the occupation experience. Brigitte was thus not perceived as a pharisee in the vertical sense of traditional Catholic teaching. Rather, she was seen horizontally as an emblem of the political class of pharisees who were now in power. The pessimism of the collaborationists about the human condition, about what man could accomplish without authoritarian leaders, reflected hers, and it was easy for readers to see the Vichy elite in Brigitte's attitudes. After all, those nostalgic for the *ancien régime* did not hide the fact that the defeat of the previous summer on the battlefield only proved that they had been right all along. They interpreted that debacle as a sign that God had wanted to punish the French nation as a whole for its decadence. The obvious shortcomings of the parliamentary system of government in the '30s had required divine intervention.

The image of the priest in this novel, the abbé Calou, is also essential to this political interpretation. He is not only the most fully developed priest in all of Mauriac's fiction, he is also Brigitte's confessor as well as the protector of the young man who thinks he is in love with Brigitte's stepdaughter. When Brigitte concludes that he has not done his utmost to keep his spiritual charge, Jean de Mirbel, away from her stepdaughter, she intervenes with the local ecclesiastical authorities to have him banished from his small rectory. He is forced to live with his brother and the latter's large family, where he is an added burden. The unjust punishment leveled against the low-ranking priest, the church figure who is the closest to the people, by unidentified hidden powers, was a powerful image for many readers in 1941—especially since abbé Calou's only offense was to sin on the side of love, support, and protection of the young and innocent.

The novel's success, welcomed by so many for reasons that the author never fully intended, led to an amazing string of happy coincidences. If Mauriac's innate sense of order had caused him, like so many other Frenchmen, to take a wait-and-see attitude in late 1940, the overwhelming success of *Woman of the Pharisees* made his name into a living symbol of what only a year or so later would come to be called the *Résistance*. In fact, already in the summer of 1941, De Gaulle's radio broadcasts from London were singling Mauriac out by name as a beacon of patriotism in the Allied cause. The publication of his pro-Allied pamphlet *Le Cahier noir* (*The Black Notebook*) in 1943 solidified this impression (*see*, *Commonweal*, April 23, 1993).

As World War II came to an end, Graham Greene, an editor in the London publishing house of Eyre and Spottiswoode, hired Gerard Hopkins to translate *La Pharisienne*. When the novel was well received on both sides of the Atlantic in 1946, Greene commissioned Hopkins to translate all of Mauriac's fiction, including the novels that had already been translated by others during the interwar years. This commitment sparked American publishers to commission translations of almost all of Mauriac's nonfiction works, so that over the next two decades virtually all of Mauriac's *oeuvre* appeared in American editions. Amazingly, hardly a year went by without at least one new Mauriac title appearing in the American market.

By now Mauriac was one of the few French intellectuals who did not adopt the pro-Soviet and anti-American attitudes so widespread at the time among those who only a few years earlier had been allies in the anti-Nazi cause. For this reason, throughout this period even *Time* magazine went all out in its praise for the man, although its understanding of his work was somewhat limited.

The novel also played an important role with the Nobel Prize committee. In awarding him the Nobel in 1952, the committee specifically cited *Woman of the Pharisees*. Mauriac later voiced the opinion that the Protestant background of most of the members of the selection committee had probably made them particularly sensitive to the problems of conscience raised in the work. At this time, he also could not keep himself from an exercise in irony by noting impishly his literary debt to Sartre. After all, if *le pape de l'existentialisme* had not attacked him so brutally in 1939, he might not have given so much care to certain technical aspects of *Woman of the Pharisees*. *La Pharisienne* is not only the centerpiece of Mauriac's fiction, it can also be seen as a kind of "missing link" in the evolution of the Catholic novel in France from a preoccupation with vertical spirituality to a primary interest in horizontal spirituality. In pondering the novel's reception in light of its author's intentions, one cannot help but think of Claudel's dictum, "God writes straight—but with crooked lines." □

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The old populism vs. the new

THE POPULIST PERSUASION
An American History
Michael Kazin
Basic Books, $24, 381 pp.

Wilson Carey McWilliams

Populism, in Michael Kazin's analysis, is not a movement or a program but a way of speaking, an appeal to "the people"—the generality of decent, working citizens—against variously defined "elites." Kazin has a special reason for this focus: in contemporary politics, Kazin prescribes populism as a rhetoric and a sympathy more than a doctrine. A left-liberal, Kazin admires populism's broadly democratic character, but he worries about its tendency to be cavalier about individual rights. As Kazin is at pains to point out, populist theory speaks to civic universals and communalities; in practice, the more specific a populist idea of "the people," the more *others* it rules out—elites, of course, but not infrequently, immigrants, minority races, or women—so that populism wavers between vagueness and exclusivity. But Kazin is at least as troubled by the inability or unwillingness of the American Left to speak to or for popular majorities, and he wants it to relearn populism's respect for ordinary citizens and their dignities.

A historian at American University, Kazin does an admirable job of tracing the transformations of the populist "persuasion," ending with its recent "capture" by the Right. Earlier populism—especially the People's party of the 1890s—was identified with the Left, concerned to limit economic inequality, committed to the rights of workers as producers, and inclined to regard political society as a moral community, to be judged by essentially religious standards. Fearful of centralization, it still saw government as potentially the people's ally, more easily controlled than economic power.

When the People's party was absorbed by the Democrats in 1896—a "failure" by some standards, but one that reshaped American party politics—populist rhetoric, in Kazin's account, became associated with labor populism in the AFL, more narrowly economic and inclined to steer clear of religion, and with the Prohibition movement, which preserved populism's religiosity but gradually moved away from its broader agenda toward a single-issue politics. The economic and spiritual were briefly reunited in the early days of Father Coughlin's Social Justice movement, and the CIO (Kazin's personal favorite, I think) carried labor populism to its greatest triumphs. But labor's successes made the unions into establishments allied to the state, while Catholic populism was apt to drift into the anticommunism of the cold-war Right, with its appeal to the majority against left-leaning intellectuals and bureaucrats.

For Kazin, the McCarthy era was a crucial turning point. It inspired a distrust of majorities among intellectuals, visible in Richard Hofstadter's influential critique of populism, encouraging the idea that a healthy democracy is a competition between elites. Reacting against that view, the New Left despised antipopulist liberals—thinkers like Hofstadter, Daniel Bell, and Seymour Martin Lipset were anathema—and it hoped to activate and empower the people. But as Kazin shows, New Left doctrine came to include both a sweeping attack on American institutions and a radically individualistic rejection of the decencies that locked the movement into intellectual enclaves, the only places

"Like it or not, dear, life is people."

REVIEWERS

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where it could credibly claim to speak for "the people."

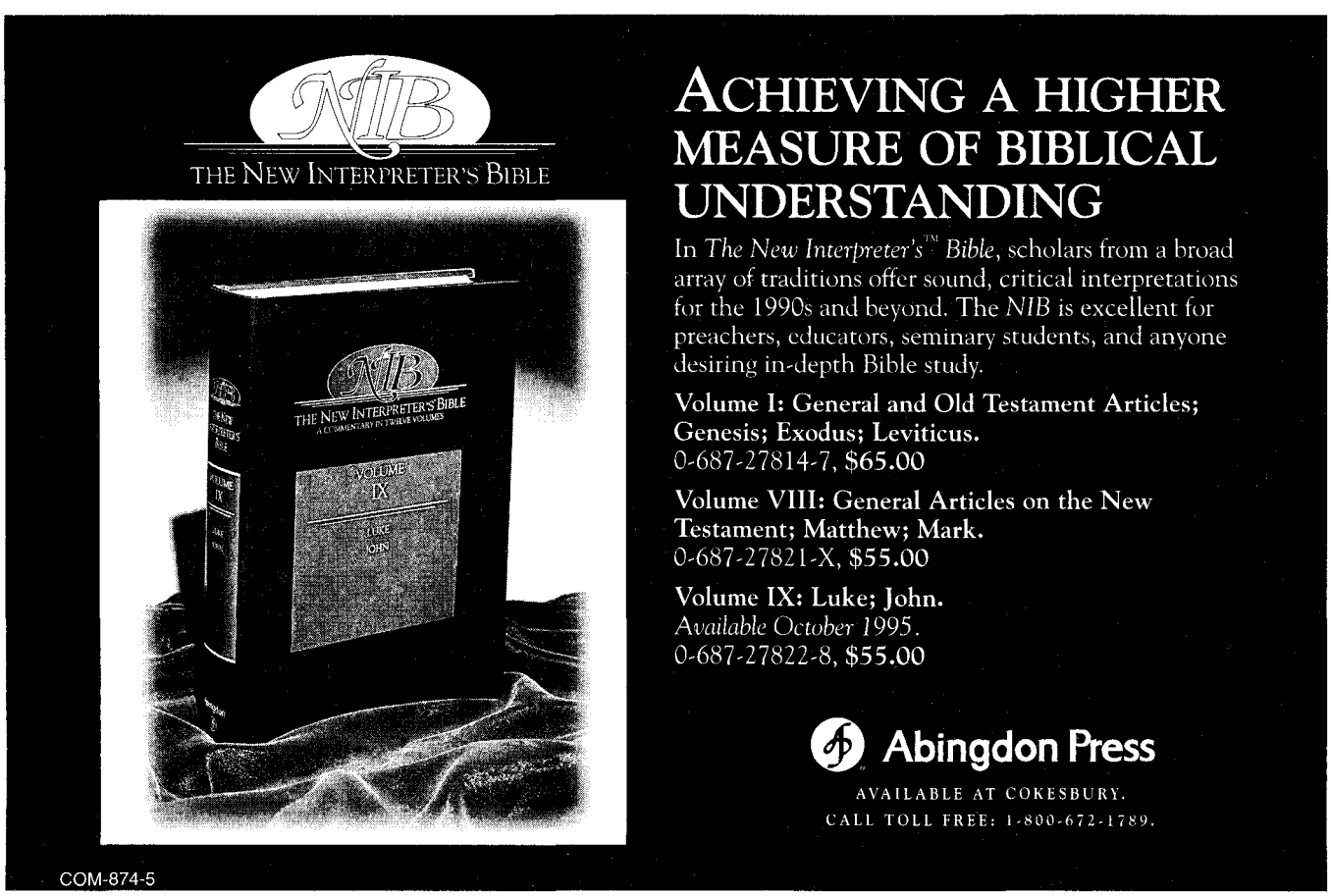
In Kazin's drama, George Wallace is a kind of tragic hero. A voice for the neglected middle and working class who favored a prolabor, active government, Wallace was trapped by the racial politics that made him a national figure. And while he returned to the Democratic party and eventually—and movingly—repented his complicity with racism, it was Wallace, Kazin argues, who taught the Right to speak in populist terms, invoking "normal Americans" against the cultural elite.

Kazin is careful to indicate, however, that conservative populism, so dependent on the rise of the "religious right," comes down to a verbal appeal to "family values" that is almost invariably subordinated to the individualism and relativism of the market. That conservatism has pulled off this farrago is due, in part, to Reagan's charm and Gingrich's energy, but more to liberalism's default. Left-intellectuality has always had its elitist strain, one reflected in the Progressive insistence that majorities need guidance from social scientists and expert administrators, or in any of the more avant claims to constitute a "vanguard." But as Kazin notes, those doctrines presumed that intellectual elites spoke as the servants or champions of "the people." By contrast, the contemporary liberal Left has become wedded to cultural and theoretical relativism and associated with an "identity politics" designed to protect favored constituencies against majorities. Bill Clinton has a populist side, but no gift for drawing political battle lines, and the populist impulse is increasingly expressed in a distrust of all parties and institutions that is a smoldering threat to constitutional democracy.

For all its virtues, Kazin's book only lightly touches the fundamental problem of which populism is a symptom. The United States was framed as a large-scale, complicated, and commercial republic with laws to match, a regime that most people have always found at least a little mysterious and overwhelming. The distinction between "the people" and "the elite" is inherent in the thing, bridged only by institutions, including the parties, that let us feel represented.

Periodically, those institutions get out of whack, inspiring some more-or-less populist movement to set things right. But where earlier populists believed, as Kazin observes, that they could build such movements from the grassroots, our politics has come to demand money, technology, and centralized organization. Unlike the old People's Party, Ross Perot's movement was leader-centered and top-down; as Perot often said, the people "can't do it for themselves." And that fact pushes more and more Americans toward the edge of fury.

Kazin is desperately right in urging the liberal Left to break out of its neo-Nietzschean discounting of "universal identities" and to rediscover public speech and the principle of equality. The "populism" of the Right ignores our mounting economic inequality in favor of old hatreds and new resentments, threatening what remains of civic community: the ultimate logic of its Babel was reflected, unmistakably, in Oklahoma City. We need to do better, and soon. □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OUTFOXING THE HEDGEHOGS

THE MORAL ANIMAL
Why We Are the Way We Are: The New Science of Evolutionary Psychology
Robert Wright
Pantheon, $27.50, 467 pp.

THE ETHICAL PRIMATE
Humans, Freedom, and Morality
Mary Midgley
Routledge, $22.95, 193 pp.

Dennis O'Brien

Isaiah Berlin shrewdly divided deep thinkers into two basic categories: hedgehogs and foxes. The hedgehog (who rolls himself in a ball when in doubt) knows one BIG thing; the fox knows many (different) things. Despite similar titles, we have here one hedgehog book and one foxy book. Hedgehogs first.

Hedgehogs, knowing something BIG, are the grandest of philosophers: Plato, Spinoza, Nietzsche. The certain mark of the hedgehog is "things are not as they seem." The world, after all, seems awfully full of a number of things, viz., ships, and seas, and sealing wax, and kings. But if you know ONE big thing, the multiplicity of appearances must be resolved into the one Truth. Hedgehog philosophy is inherently exciting because it claims to strip away the veil of illusion. All is the Good, God, or the Will to Power.

There are in fact two classes of hedgehog: up-scale and, I suppose, down-scale. Up-scale hedgehogs see everything as mere parts of some magnificent whole. What is the hand but a part of the human body, what is humanity but a dream in the mind of God? Down-scale hedgehogs are convinced that the meaning of the whole is in the fundamental parts. Analysis of chemical complexity into atomic fundamentals is paradigmatic. It is important to recognize hedgehoggery in both modes—but also to note that in either mode the search is for reality behind the appearances, or the *reduction* of appearances to something else *really* real. Up-scale hedgehogs are rather out of favor these days, but down-scale types are under every avant-garde bush. The prevalence of the down-scale, analysis-into-parts type is not hard to understand: they proceed in the (or at least *a*) style of science.We may have lost faith in something grand going on over our heads, but not in the neurons inside our heads.

Robert Wright, the author of *The Moral Animal*, is a down-scale hedgehog—with a slightly "guilty" conscience. His thesis is that evolution, and specifically the revolutionary new science of "evolutionary psychology," will "explain" the moral characteristics of the human species. The down-scale move is, of course, that when it comes to explaining human behavior it is the simple parts (genes) that explain the complex moral appearances. We may think we are being altruistic, but the genes know nothing of altruism beyond reciprocity for their own good. Wright not only expounds this thesis in general, he conceives the ingenious notion of taking Charles Darwin as a case study in moral appearance and genetic reality.

Darwin was almost universally admired in his generation and by his later biographers as an exceptionally moral individual. Wright undertakes a revisionist analysis to suggest that his high-mindedness might also (or better) be understood as genetic survival tactics. What then is the "moral" conclusion of genetic reductionism? Wright himself suggests that his portrayal is "cynical." "So what's new about cynicism?" he says. "The question may be whether, after the new Darwinism takes root, the word *moral* can be anything but a joke." But then, rather surprisingly, he seems to develop a guilty conscience and opts for compassion and J.S. Mill (*Utilitarianism* was published in 1858, the same year as *Origin of Species*). How does compassion arise from all those ruthless genes? What evolutionary psychology does for morality, says Wright, is to make us less arrogant. Understanding how we get pushed around by our genetic urges makes us cautious about condemnation, more tolerant, more forgiving.

Wright's book is long and based on multiple sources; I have emphasized "hedgehoggery" as the fundamental key to what is going on because it is so typical of all sorts of down-scale reductions perennially on the market. All these efforts have an air of excitement: a new science is about to be perfected (evolutionary psychology, artificial intelligence, psychoanalysis of some sort) which will definitively explain the multiple confusions of everyday consciousness. These "sciences" are never *quite* perfected, but one can predict that in a few years, with a few more discoveries, the definitive truth will be established. Were these grand promises ever to be fulfilled, some deep philosopher (not a popularizing enthusiast) might want to consider at least two fundamental issues for down-scale reduction: freedom and truth.

It should come as no surprise that Wright has no place for "free will." Free will is an "illusion," a "useful fiction" because everything is determined by a combination of genetics ("knobs") and environment ("tuning"). But the notion that this brand of "determinism" is the key to compassion is perverse. The best that can emerge from thoroughgoing determinism would be a "morality" of excuses (victims are blameless) never a morality (you have a moral responsibility not to blame victims!). I do not see how there can be a moral compulsion to forgive the victim, when there is no moral agent to whom one can appeal.

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The final fatality for reductionism is the problem of truth. As Wright says, "Truth...is a concept to which natural selection is indifferent." If it is true that we are merely the conditioned response of genes and environment, are there any grounds for truth? If the big Truth is genes, then there is no truth, only ideologies. If natural selection is true, then *Origin of Species* cannot be true, not to mention Wright's fervid extrapolations. This is a self-defeating line of analysis. For example: Is it insignificant that a "theory" of natural competitiveness in which status hierarchy is all-important arises in Victorian Britain, then at the crest of world empire? Darwin is not a "scientist" but the alpha-male ideologue of an imperial class. And so on with similar destructive and delusory arguments.

One of my philosophy mentors, Warner Wick, wrote a lovely little essay called "Truth's Debt to Freedom": if there is no freedom—just knobs and tuning—not only is there no morality worth mentioning, there is no truth either. Proclaiming indifference to truth is a poor prospectus for Wright's sensational new science.

In turning to Mary Midgley's *The Ethical Primate*, one moves into the same range of topics but with a wholly different—and refreshingly rational—approach. Midgley is a sure-footed philosophical fox. Where hedgehogs ask: What is the ultimate *whole*? What are the ultimate parts?, foxes ask: What is the problem? Aristotle, the founding fox, gives an excellent example of the approach. If, he says, one is building a *trireme* (ancient boat) one would have to know something about the wood it is made out of—but not as much as a botanist would know; one would have to know something about how it would be used—but not as much as an admiral would have to know. The problem at hand sets the dimensions of analysis. Pushing to the ultimates on either end not only does not help us to build the boat, the very idea of boat dissolves completely into cellulose molecules or the final ends of the universe—neither of which has much time for *triremes*—or the ethical constitution of certain biological primates.

Foxes are definitely not *reductionist*; life has lots of different problems and it does no good to analyze the multiplicity of reality away in one swell foop. If one turns to the *problem* of human morality, the philosophic fox will not seek to reveal it as an illusion, but to understand its constitution. The problem is how to relate the biological material to our peculiar moral function. Up-scale hedgehogs may think this an impossible task: humans are souls trapped in bodies and the sooner we forget the biological the better. Down-scale hedgehogs will tread the Wright path and insist that it is all biology. Mary Midgley, in contrast, holds that we are both primates and peculiarly human—and not in some mechanical composite, but in an integrated, if complex and messy, whole. We are rational (and moral) animals.

The surest sign of the difference between Midgley and Wright is that while the latter can see nothing but determinism in evolution, Midgley is interested in showing why "freedom" is a plausible outcome of our evolutionary status. She imagines a creator, C, who wants to create free beings. This ambition is scorned by fellow creators who consider it philosophically confused. C proceeds, nevertheless, to fashion a creature with multiple desires, and he makes sure that the desires conflict. He then makes the creatures bright enough to see that they have to do something about the conflict. The conflicts are not simple like *drink* and *don't drink* but between *drink* and *finish building your house*. As a sort of "ballast," C gives the creatures instinctive sociability so that they will tend to take a broader and longer-range view of what they desire. These beings will have all sorts of individual differences of temperament, sex, and age, as well as different social traditions. The fact that they are both "sociable" and "among aliens" (other sexes, other tribes) will bother them and make them step back from their own motives and decide how *to make a whole out of their own lives*. As C says, "That is surely the point of freedom."

The point of "free will" is not to establish an "uncaused cause" but to fix on humans as rational agents who, as such, are held to be the responsible causes of at least some of their actions. Midgley elegantly defends the notion of humans as peculiarly rational agents. Because of the bother of making a whole out of the conflicting desires and social nature bequeathed us by our primate cousins, we are forced to deliberate and decide on actions for which we (not our genes) take praise or blame.

Is it all genes and environment? Yes, in the sense that we have to *learn* to deliberate, we have to learn what promises mean, when to praise and blame. Freedom (being able to make decisions) does not come by nature. Note that we also have to *learn* mathematics but the *meaning* of arithmetic is not reduced to our grammar-school social conditioning.

Human decision and deliberation are fundamentally different from the resolution of desires common to animals. Darwin noted the behavior of migratory birds who, when the migration begins, simply abandon all, including fledglings in the nest. Migratory urges always triumph. If humans were migrating birds, they too might be overcome by the urge to flight—but there might be some regret at leaving the youngsters behind. In fact, a few might refuse to go or might turn back. Wright views humans as radio receivers: all knobs and tunings. But when the stations get tuned out, the radio does not regret missing the last movement of the Brahms Third.

Midgley points out that all the great and little reductionisms of history are driven by a powerful moral motive—even if, like Wright, they finally can't justify the morality preached. Lucretius, a great and poetic down-scale hedgehog, wanted to rid the ancients of superstition. Materialist reduction removed false fears of nonexistent deities. Wright wants to remove the superstition of blame and retribution. As Midgley notes, this is a worthy enough idea for specific cases, and our moral sense has been much refined by coming to appreciate the immense psychic pressures that can determine action. The appeal of the argument rests, however, on its direction toward the past and toward *others*. If we turn to our own actions and our view of the future, "the categories of freedom exist primarily to help us think our way forward, about what we ourselves...should do next and thereafter. For that purpose, it is absolutely vital for us to distinguish what we can help from what we cannot. And, bad though we may be at doing this, muddled though our accounts of the situation may be, we have no choice but to press on with them and make them better." □

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Knowing God, Jesus & the church

Lawrence S. Cunningham

In the first volume of his history of Western Christian mysticism (*The Foundations of Mysticism* [1991]), Bernard McGinn set out by insisting, as he restates it in the present volume, that mysticism should (a) be understood as an aspect or element in concrete religious communities and/or traditions and not as something discrete; (b) that the proper way to approach Christian mysticism is through historical study as mysticism develops in the tradition; and (c) that mysticism be understood as that process or preparation by which a person prepares for, and is conscious of, the direct experience of God.

The third point is most useful because it permits McGinn to sidestep or bracket those largely interminable and never quite conclusive debates about whether author X is or is not a mystic if that author did not leave behind some firsthand autobiographical account of his or her experience. It also gets away from conundra like those which ask: if mystical experience is totally ineffable how can it be described adequately? and, also, if the ineffability is described oxymoronically (for example, the Sanjuanista *todo y nada*) is the experience the same for all mystics? These are not uninteresting questions, but as McGinn shows in an elaborate appendix to his first volume, there is no unanimity on these and many other topics and, finally, it is not his topic.

The Growth of Mysticism (volume 2 of The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism), *by Bernard McGinn, Crossroad, $49.50, 630 pp.*

Volume 2 surveys the Christian West from roughly the end of the patristic period down to circa A.D. 1200. Heirs to a tradition that went back as early as Origen, Christian writers believed that one could come to an experience of God through an intense encounter with the Word of God, that is, sacred Scripture. There was, in short, right through the period McGinn surveys, an intimate nexus between exegesis and mysticism. Indeed, *theologia mystica* meant nothing esoteric; it meant speech about God deriving from an authentic understanding of the hidden (*mystikos*) meaning of the Bible. Hence the emphasis on reading (*lectio*) in the monastic tradition; as a later writer would put it, reading leads to contemplation.

The second fact about this period (roughly A.D. 500 to 1200) is that Christian mystical writing was largely a product of monastic culture. As McGinn notes, over thirty monastic rules were written between A.D. 400-700. It was Benedict's Rule that would, in the Carolingian period, become the best known, but much earlier Pope Gregory the Great (540?–604), drawing on Benedictine sources (it was from him that we know anything at all about Benedict), crafted a wonderfully coherent theory and vocabulary of contemplation and its nexus to the apostolic life.

The great bridge builder of the early Middle Ages is John Scotus Erigena (died 877), an incredibly learned Irishman who, among other things, translated the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius into Latin and thus, in a stroke, started a stream of "dark" or apophatic theology which would leave its mark on every major medieval thinker as well as subsequent figures like the great mystics John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. In addition, as McGinn shows, Erigena emphasized in the West (largely through his knowledge of the Eastern fathers) the sophianic character of Christ, the power of divine grace to "deify" us, and the dialectical character of our knowledge/nonknowledge of God.

The period after the reforms initiated by Pope Gregory VII (1020?–1085) saw an outbreak of new orders, both eremetical and cenobitic, which is surveyed by McGinn. The second half of his book focuses most expansively on the Cistercians, for it is among them that, to use McGinn's formulation of it, *experience* becomes paramount: "I believe that I might experience," and that "experience" is the love of God. In a brilliant chapter on Bernard of Clairvaux, McGinn sets out the Bernardine doctrine of love of God as Bernard develops it in his synthesis of Christology, theological anthropology, and exegesis. A subsequent chapter treats William of Saint Thierry, and a third treats the other Cistercian masters. The book ends with a consideration of the Parisian Victorine school, whose masters would be so important in the transition period when theology shifts to the university.

It is impossible in the short space of this column to do an adequate description of the comprehensiveness of this work in progress. However, there are a few points worth emphasizing. First, this is a work of deep scholarship. The two hundred pages of notes, bibliographies, and indices not only provide a resource for further study but McGinn has cited all of his primary works, quoted in the text, in their original language so that those so inclined might check his translations against the

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original. Second, by discussing mysticism in the context of the Christian community as it historically evolves, he "demystifies" mysticism, allowing us to see two things: its close connection to the larger reality known as the Christian faith and, second, how certain motifs and insights deriving from the mystical tradition still exert their power on our lives today.

The *ressourcement* of the last fifty years, for example, in biblical studies, has brought not only a better grasp of how the Bible is constructed but has spawned an intense interest in biblical study and biblical spirituality. A close reader of McGinn will get more than one hint as to how one might meld biblical study to spiritual enrichment. Thus, his historical study provides background and context for those contemporary efforts of writers who attempt to envision a truly Christian spirituality that is faithful to the biblical witness.

There is, finally, abroad in the theological world today an attempt to bring systematic theology closer to spirituality. McGinn's work is of inestimable help in that enterprise. In his detailed consideration of persons like Gregory, Bernard, William of Saint Thierry, and the Victorines he is at pains to discuss them as theologians while not losing sight of his primary objective, which is their desire for the immediate knowledge of God. It is for that reason alone that I anticipate with eagerness his next volume (tentatively titled *The Flowering of Mysticism*), where he will consider the period of the scholastics—a period when much of theology shifts from the cloister to the university lecture hall.

In sum, this second volume is a worthy companion to the first. It belongs on the shelf of every serious student of the Christian enterprise (and in all theological libraries) and will be, I am sure, the standard work on the subject for decades to come.

Raymond Brown is, of course, one of the premier Catholic biblical scholars of this century. His work, however, has been complemented by a lifelong attempt to mediate the best results of biblical research to a broader audience. The extensive publication list of now classic works like his commentary on John and his work on the infancy and passion narratives did not keep him from writing both on spiritual topics (biblical reflections on the liturgical seasons) and particular studies of interest to students of the New Testament.

An Introduction to New Testament Christology, *by Raymond E. Brown, Paulist, $9.95., 226 pp.*

This present work, I suspect, is to help the nonspecialist understand the current debates about the person and meaning of Jesus Christ as the New Testament presents him. It is also clear that he wishes to show, in a nonpolemical fashion, that certain highly touted contemporary books about Jesus are based on little evidence, much guesswork, and not a little media hype. At the same time, he is explicitly aware that a certain naive fundamentalism is unhealthy. What Brown intends, in short, is to show that one can be at home with the historic-doctrinal tradition of Christology without attempting to read retrospectively into the New Testament insights and dogmatic formulations which took the Christian community centuries of thought and reflection at which to arrive. To put it plainly: to understand how one marries contemporary biblical studies with the ongoing tradition of theology one must develop a sense of history to avoid (I think the phrase is Michael Novak's) "ahistorical orthodoxy."

Brown begins with an introductory section on the range of Christological interpretations available today, that is, from nonscholarly conservatism through both scholarly and nonscholarly liberalism to moderate scholarly conservativism. He follows that with a series of chapters which show, among other things, that one must sort out various Christologies (there is no such thing as one New Testament Christology) and what these facets of understanding indeed teach us.

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RELIGIOUS BOOKNOTES

Within that discussion, he assesses a series of perennially asked questions: Does the New Testament call Jesus "God"? What consciousness did Jesus have of his divinity? What is the significance of "preministry" Christologies (that is, the infancy of Jesus; his youth)? What connections are there or could there be between "high Christologies" like that found in John's Prologue with Christologies found in the synoptics?

In passing, Brown then makes judgments about the work of both exegetes and systematic theologians. More detailed questions are laid out in a series of appendices. The very brief annotated bibliography is a thermometer of Brown's own predilections: he would identify himself with biblical scholars like James Dunn, Joseph Fitzmyer, John Meier, and Reginald Fuller as well as theologians like Walter Kasper. His disdain for the "Jesus Seminar" circle is patent.

Brown's book would be of interest to anyone who seeks to see a lucid argument for the fruits of biblical scholarship put to the service of the Christian theological tradition. In that sense its value is exemplary not only for Christology but for its power to correlate New Testament research to theological reflection. I can easily see it as a text for serious, nontechnical classes in the New Testament.

For Catholic reference books I have a very simple rule of thumb: can one find basic information that someone (like a reporter) might wish to know about the phe-

The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia, *edited by Michael Glazier and Monika Hellwig, Liturgical Press/Glazier Books, $69.95, 933 pp.*

nomena of Catholicism? Hardly a week goes by without somebody calling our department asking for a point of information. As the resident "expert" in Catholic trivia, I usually get these questions. Here are some recent topics of inquiry: angels, stigmata, apparitions, the origin of Saint Valentine's Day, Halloween, and, most recently, why Saint Joseph is often depicted holding a lily on a staff. Glazier and Hellwig have entries on all but Halloween and Saint Joseph's lily. Well, four out of six is not bad. On the broader topics to which I receive queries such as birth control, abortion, etc., the encyclopedia does better.

Most of the things I first thought to look up were in this encyclopedia. The entries on doctrine were reliable and "middle of the road." The editors themselves preferred to emphasize more modern figures (Dorothy Day, John XXIII, Thomas Merton, etc.) at the expense of older figures in the tradition. There are some "boxes" to amplify entries (a list of all popes at the entry on "pope" and a list of the various Eastern churches with their populations under the entry "Eastern Churches"), and both black and white and color illustrations.

Having been involved with more than one encyclopedia project, I am keenly aware of the difficulty of deciding what entries to include in a one-volume reference book. Nonetheless, one sees, inevitably, some oddities and lacunae. This encyclopedia is no exception to that generalization. First, oddities: an entry on "mosaic" that turns out not to be about an art form but an adjective for Moses (who does not get an entry; nor does Abraham). Furthermore, after the article on the Dominican Order there is an entry on one congregation of Dominican Sisters (why just that one?) but none after the Franciscans. Again, after the article "Catholicism" there is another one on "Catholicism, Irish" but none on "Catholicism, Italian or Polish" or whatever. Why this little flair of national pride when the book is published at a distinguished abbey founded by German-speaking monks? Again, there is an entry on a minor Irish poet, Patrick Kavanaugh, but nothing on writers like Paul Claudel, François Mauriac, Georges Bernanos, et al.

In sum: on a scale of one to ten I would give this work about a six. However, to avoid appearance of any conflict of interest, I should confess to being an associate editor of another one-volume Catholic encyclopedia, published by HarperSan Francisco. It is from that prejudicial angle that I make this assessment. Let the potential buyer compare. □

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

Murray wrote, "genuine disagreement is a rare achievement." In his book, Smith insists that the church must change its position so that it will agree with his own. It is precisely this demand for agreement on sexual morality, this unwillingness to accept "difference," that I found problematic in the book.

I agree that in a society as polarized as ours, we need to celebrate what unites us. I agree that it is good for old stereotypes to fall away. In fact, I agree with almost everything else Smith puts in his letter. There is a good deal of valuable information in the book as well. It's just that when it comes to AIDS, gays, and the Catholic church, I do not think the author does a very good job of discovering where the common ground lies.

One tiny quibble with Smith's letter: I *would* ask a traditional Catholic to relinquish the conviction that "homosexuality is an abomination," because I do not believe that is the church's teaching. What the church does teach is that homosexual acts are always immoral. JAMES L. NASH

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Apprenticeship

WILLIAM HOUGHTON

As a child, I hated work. Work was chores: picking up your clothes, cutting grass, raking leaves, shoveling snow. I saw those things as tedious, meaningless, and imposed by an authority, my parents, or the nuns who forced me to read and write. I copied my rows of letters and words, boringly over and over, but I hated every stroke, which showed in my penmanship, and is part of my handwriting style to this day. (Copying drawings of elk and wolves from outdoor magazines was a different matter, lots of fun, but not the assignment.)

I kept myself apart from the spirit of the job, going through the motions only, quick to duck out. It was going to be hard work for me to learn to work.

In those days, the 1950s, a high school kid could easily try out an assortment of odd jobs. I was a clerk in a hardware store—endless long hours watching customers deliberate, or tapping wire screens into frames, all in the dusty, acrid smell of fertilizer—and drove a truck for a painting company. The first few days there was a rush of new streets and new scenes, but it soon settled down to the same old routes and routines.

The job I had for four summers with a suburban department of public works, along with a gang of high school buddies, was my first taste of satisfying work. There was hard labor at times—collecting trash, trimming trees, cutting grass—but there were lavish helpings of leisure, too—learning the art of leaning motionless on a spade for hours, drinking in the sun and the breeze, or retiring to the shade each day at 2:30 for a cool half-hour quart of beer. My hands grew thick callouses, my legs and back grew strong, so that any task—even strolling down the street—was easy. Working on the D.P.W. crew gave me equality in the fraternity of workers, many of them full-timers in their forties and fifties. These "old guys" had their strengths and weaknesses. Some of them seemed to me prodigies of physical strength, endurance, or bargaining shrewdness. But up close I saw that they cut corners and goofed off just as much as we kids did, which put us on an equal footing, and made me feel grown-up.

About the same time, I enjoyed a Jesuit high school which had a reputation for hard work and high standards. As in the D.P.W., I admired the old Jebbies' knowledge and discipline, which corresponded with the usual notion of work, but I also saw that some of these same old Jebbies had a love of chewing the fat and hanging out, just like the boys. Some had a passion for the precise Latin declension, the eccentric historical fact, or *le mot juste*. They showed me that work is a labor of love, and getting it right means something. I began to join in the spirit of the job; it was me doing it, not someone else.

In college, when I needed more money, I worked in factories, a soft drink plant, a cardboard box plant, shift work at times, and I felt in my bones how numbing the repetition, noise, and weird hours were. I and hundreds of co-workers stumbled in circles like zombies at 2 A.M. Even there, people clung to their individuality: the old Polish dervish lady who made a point of turning out more boxes than anyone else (without an obvious incentive), the pasty-faced young man ("Smolinski!") who smiled fixedly and didn't let our teasing get to him, the middle-aged man who always brought a "fancy" lunch of hot soup or stew in a thermos.

I was born blessed with a powerful imagination, but this imagination was a curse, too. Faced with any decision, I could always think of multiple problems and alternatives, and I tended to get bogged down in indecision. Jobs offered me the chance to plunge into the stream of daily action, and to learn by doing, rather than trying to figure everything out ahead of time.

The decision for a lifetime career was, of course, an overwhelming challenge for me. I got around that by pretending to myself that I was taking up medical school as a part-time job, perhaps for a few summers like the D.P.W., and so backed into a medical career. Cramming my head with chemical formulas was like practicing the Palmer method, equally boring, but going on the wards in white coats was joining the adult world again. Work with patients who counted on me gave me a motive to help them, and when I walked the hospital corridors at 2 A.M. I felt grown-up, responsible, more or less awake, and entirely there (though terrified, often enough).

Psychiatry was more abstract, interior, but fit my love of watching personalities, and I came across a definition of "work" in the psychotherapeutic process which rings true: work is the effort to push against my fear, dig deeper, and speak out, even though I am afraid.

Medicine and psychiatry are complex and deep enough that some practitioners bury themselves in them, never emerging into other interests. I welcomed the identity of scientist and helper, but found that in addition to plunging in, there's an advantage in pulling out, too. Even plunging into yard work or household chores can be a satisfying break from a steady diet of psychiatry.

If work is a way to step into action, to mark the world, then the size of my mark may be relatively small, not much greater than cutting grass or stamping a few boxes. Still, I am the one who decides to do it, and the job gives me another way to know the world.

Work is the hard skin between tender ideas and the stubborn world. □

William Houghton, M.D., practices psychiatry in Milwaukee.

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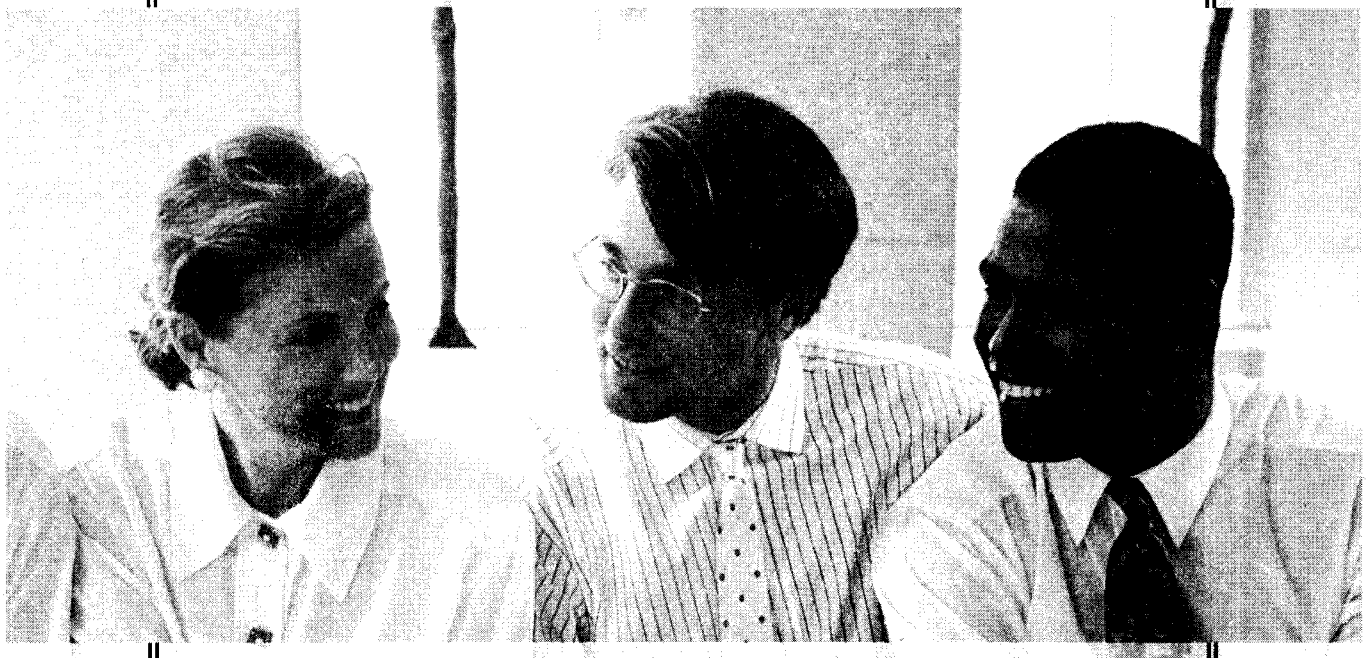

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